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Have you ever noticed how life can be like a game show? There is always the point in the show where the host taps his watch and says, "Sorry folks, we've run out of time." And the audience goes "Awwww . . ." Fun's over.

Today's gospel is an apocalyptic text in which Jesus is revealed and it's all about, 'Sorry folks, we've run out of time!' And that's a good thing. Today we've got Jesus riding in on a cloud of power surrounded by angels and letting us know: time's up!

Recently, where have we seen people, men exclusively, who have run out of time? Well, Harvey Weinstein comes to mind. He is our poster boy for the guy who's run out of time. Why? Because we know now that he's an immoral person who thought he could do whatever he wanted to young women, that his sexual immorality had NO consequences.

For decades he carved out an immoral universe in Hollywood, with assistants who were willing to help him in his insatiable greed and lust for young women. He used the imbalance of power for his own benefit. He forgot, or didn't think worth thinking that there is morality, and there would be a reckoning – and he would be on the receiving end of the reckoning. He never realized that at some point in the future, there would be a divine reckoning. At the heart of the universe there IS justice.

Now we've seen the spectacle of a powerful man who ran out of time. Sin makes us stupid. Let me repeat that: sin makes us stupid. We see Harvey as the illustration of that. Lust put the blinders on him. Satisfying his lust was his god. His own board of directors fired him, practically saying, "Sorry, Harvey, you've just run out of time." Suddenly, he discovers (gasp!) that morality matters! Suddenly he sees the moral universe grabbing him and there are consequences! For him! Imagine that. That immoral people like himself are going to experience consequences. It's a big surprise. After all, he went for decades avoiding that very thing!

Harvey is symbolic of all of the rich men in the parables that Jesus likes to make fun of. Who think they've got the world on a string, when suddenly they're pulled up short. In the gospels, the rich man is embarrassed (which is an unexpected turn about.) Or the rich man hoards his wealth only to discover that (duh!) even the rich will die and goes to Hades!

In today's gospel, Jesus comes in glory with angels. He comes and there is a reckoning. And that is good news for all of us! The world is being turned right side up when Jesus comes in glory.

As Pastor Nadia Bolz Weber says, this gospel points to how we are all a part of a bigger story.¹ Today's gospel for the first Sunday of Advent lets us know that there is a bigger story than just you, and me, and the abusive worlds that Harvey Weinstein, Roger Ailes, Charlie Rose, Bill Cosby, Garson Keillor, and now Matt Lauer created. We are a part of this larger story whether we wish to acknowledge it or not. The bigger story is that Jesus is coming in glory. It is the climax of a story that we are all a part of, and that we await. You can try and ignore morality, like Harvey, but everyone is a part of the bigger

¹ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2016/11/you-know-what-sounds-awesome-about-now-a-good-juicy-apocalypse-an-advent-sermon/good-juicy-apocalypse-an-advent-sermon/>.

story. And for some, they've run out of time. For the Harvey's who thought they had endless time – it's a shock that there are limits.

It's Advent and it is a time of hope. Not naïve hopes or optimism, but hopes based in Christ's promises for us. We see a glimmer of that hope fulfilled even now, when we see justice coming after the Harveys, the Rogers, the Bills, the Matts. This is the triumph of the innocent lambs, with the Lamb of God leading us in triumph. It is the triumph of those who are powerless, whose cause Jesus has taken up in the name of justice. And it points to a time when the whole world will be flipped right side up for good. Where everyone will get their just desserts, when all of the innocent lambs (you and me) will be vindicated.

It's Advent and we see that there is a light on the horizon coming closer and closer. It may be traveling slowly, but it is surely coming. The light is traveling, it is on its way, and it is here simultaneously. The glimmers of light that we already have are a promise of even more light to come.

It's Advent and we hear the faint echoes of a song. It's Mary's song in the Magnificat that we hear very faintly in the distance: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly . . . His mercy is for those who fear him." Even now we see some of the powerful brought down from their self-created thrones of power.

It's Advent, and we remember that the walk of faith is an ongoing journey. We haven't arrived yet. We are also not to make a cozy nest of our faith either, but to keep moving forward with each other as companions and fellow pilgrims.

I hope and pray that this shift in the culture is permanent. Knowing people, knowing sinfulness, knowing our weaknesses and our short attention spans, we may all go back to sleep after awhile.

"Stay awake!" Jesus says in today's gospel. Stay awake! "But about that day or hour no one knows." This text has been used to scare people into good behavior. Let's not do that here. Let's just say because Christ loves us, we in turn want to share that love with others. How do we stay awake like Jesus says? The way we keep awake is with the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, which are gifts for us to use for each other, to build the kingdom. That's how we stay awake. We hold onto our faith. We come together with others into a community of hope. Our acts of charity keep us centered on the one, true hope, the risen Christ. We may not know the time Christ is returning – but we do know Christ's justice is coming.

Pastor Nadia Bolz Weber says: "But expectancy isn't about the certainty of faith – expectancy is about the mystery of faith: that Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again."² Advent is all about expectancy. We look at the many Harveys of this world whose time is up, and despite their wealth and what appeared as almost limitless power, their lives are revealed as empty. We know they've missed crucial elements of what it means to be human. The clock has run out on these guys. We see how very temporal is the nature of their accomplishments, and we look to Christ's kingdom for justice that will last. We know that an authentic kingdom established by the Prince of Peace will, at some time in the future, supplant these false empires that were carved out of pain.

² Ibid.

Lady Gaga sings and it makes a good song for Advent as we wait in hope for the complete fulfillment of justice: "I'm on the EDGE of GLORY, and I'm HANGING on a moment of TRUTH. Out on the EDGE of Glory, and I'm hanging on a moment with you."

With a game show, the contestants can console themselves with, 'Well, it was only a game. It's not as if it's real life or something.' It's confined to the artificiality and illusions of a theater stage, complete with light and makeup artists to make it all look 'real.' But when people in power take advantage of and treat others as if it's a game, with the odds stacked so that the powerful always win, we look for justice. We demand justice. Sometimes the temporal world serves it up, and we see the rare spectacle of the Harveys disgraced.

Yet so often the Harveys escape detection, let alone receive the punishment they deserve, so today's gospel is especially satisfying. We get Christ's promise that red-blooded, full-throated, angel-powered justice is coming. It may appear to be slow, but it is on its way.

Lord, I thank you for this time of Advent.

Thank you that for the glimmers of hope and justice we see in this world, precursors of the full justice that you intend.

Thank you that we get to see that even powerful men are part of the larger picture of faith and morality.

When we see that these powerful men have run out of time, we remember that time belongs to you, almighty God. Help us to use the time you've given us with wisdom and justice.

We remember that sin makes all of us stupid. Give us your light and grace to penetrate our own sinful darkness that cloud and cover us.

Thank you for your great love. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.