

## *Round About that Time*

Advent 1 Luke 21:25-36

**Cast:** memorized, amplified reader/actor, offstage reader also amplified

**Preset:** A tight composition of abstract shapes and objects.

- round table on end (sun, yellow)
- large square box or square table on end (conventional signs, red)
- upturned stool or chair (legs = stars, orange)
- an assortment of lower shapes on the floor (waves, blue)
- angular table on end (mountain, purple)
- angular table on end or a pole, ie microphone stand (tree, green)

**Props:** Fabric in order of appearance – yellow, red, orange, blue, purple, green.

Have cloth in this descending order in a basket or bucket.

**Production notes:** Try draping shapes from the back to prevent having your back to the congregation. Rehearse thoroughly with the cloth and off-stage reader. Become familiar with how the fabric “behaves.” Memorize fully, amplify.

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*(enter with basket of cloth)*

We can imagine the people of Israel asking, “How will we know?”

And the disciples asked all the time “When will this be?” (Luke 21:7)

Two thousand years later, a continent away we add our questions to theirs knowing we’re still asking the same thing: *What time is it on God’s clock?*

**Offstage: Jesus answers like this: “There will be signs.”**

*(drape square shape with red cloth, admonishing)*

We’re going to have to stop looking for square ones – street corners, computer monitors and squares on a calendar. God’s signs are round.

**Offstage: “There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars.”**

*(drape round shape with yellow cloth)*

We’ll have to listen for a full answer, not a flat one. God’s time doesn’t lay flat or march forward. *(beat, gently revelatory)* It comes “a-round.” Signs in the sun. *Round* like the sun, crescent like the moon, a half-seen circle.

**Offstage: So when will this be?**

*(drape stool legs with orange cloth)*

We’ll need to be prepared for *cosmic* answers knowing we’ve been exhausted by digital ones. This age has made time visible in glowing red numbers, *angular* numbers and *(beat, cynical)* a nine-volt battery lest the power goes out.

*(billow blue cloth throughout verse)*

**Offstage: Jesus said there will be cosmic signs and earthly signs. On earth - distress and confusion among the nations, fearful watching of the roaring sea.**

*(drape floor shapes with blue cloth)*

We will need to be prepared for that kind of chaos.

The kind of chaos that destroys beachfront property?

The kind that sends us to the store for generators and bottled water?

Nope. Worse than that. *(slow, measured, serious)*

This is the kind of chaos that disorders our calendar.

*(billow purple cloth throughout verse, drape mountain shape)*

**Offstage: Jesus said, “People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then ...”**

“Then.” *(musing)* First *this*. Then *that*.

First circular signs, round answers, massive disruption. God’s time is circular.

So then ... what?

**Offstage: “Then they will see the son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. *(beat)* Now when these things begin ...”**

“When they begin.” *(realization)* God’s time is circular. First this. Now what?

**Offstage: “Stand up! Raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near.”**

*(cynical)* And that’s supposed to be Good News?

*(gently)* Is it is if you’re suffering.

This is supposed to be motivating?

*(slowly, with emphasis)* It is if we realize time is not infinite.

*(pause, gentler)* This is confusing, then *and* now, which is why Jesus told this parable:

*(billow and drape tree shape with green cloth)*

**Offstage: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees, *as soon as* they sprout leaves ...”**

“As soon as.” Another way of saying “when.” God’s time is circular.

*When* we see the leaves, then what?

**Offstage: “Then ... you can see for yourself.”**

No one has to tell you.

**Offstage: “And you will *know* for yourself.”**

This sign system is a totally sufficient way of knowing. *(puzzled)* Knowing what?

**Offstage: That “summer is already near.”**

God’s peace is as *close* as summer.

God’s peace is as *sure* as summer.

We seem desperate to “be sure.” We always seem to be running the numbers, doing the math, announcing dates. When we stop assigning calendar numbers to God’s clock we will see heaven’s clock doesn’t *have* numbers. (*beat*) It has leaves.

Let’s pay attention to the leaves and we will be sure.

Sure that God is close, sure that God is soon.