

The Twinkling Of An Eye

I Corinthians 15:51

“Look, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die,
but we will all be changed, in a moment,
in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.”

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24, 2025

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I.

On this most holy of nights I would like to speak to you of time, of its relativity, its reach, and its passing. World renown Theoretical Physicist Albert Einstein was once credited with an explanation of how time, though *measured* the same in every situation, seems to be *experienced* quite differently depending on where you are and what you are doing. That is to say, time is relative to the person who is experiencing its passing. To explain this rather complex idea in the simplest of terms, it is purported Einstein once told his assistant: “*When you sit with a nice girl/boy for two hours you think it’s only a minute, but when you sit on a hot stove for a minute you think it’s two hours. That’s relativity.*” Not to be so bold as to best Einstein, but on this night, Christmas Eve, and at this hour, the Candlelight service, we have a far better illustration.

II.

For the children here among us this hour, without question, seems the longest of the year. The carols all have nine verses, the words of the pastor flow like molasses and no amount of fidgeting will hasten the movement of the clock hands. For the parents of these children, this one hour seems to offer a welcome, if all too brief, restoration of normalcy. One comes to appreciate just being able to sit, to catch one’s breath, and gather oneself before the herculean push to bedtime; theirs *and* yours. For all of the adults here this evening this hour marks the arrival of that which has been steadily and frantically racing toward us for months and, in spite of so many signals to the contrary, we cannot believe Christmas time is upon us already and once again. Finally, for those of a certain age, this one hour gathers together a lifetime of Christmases past. The hope and fears of so many years, meeting here, in this place, again, tonight.

III.

Depending on one's position along life's journey, this same hour of the Christmas Eve Service can seem to pass excruciatingly slow, arrive at a break-neck pace, or give us the sense that no time at all has passed. Regardless of how it feels to us, however, time, itself, is indeed marching on. The first Christmas Eve service ever held in *this* sanctuary took place on a Wednesday, 142 years ago, in the year 1877. One year before the original church building erected in 1828 and referred to as the Old Stone Church, was intentionally demolished with construction of this current building beginning immediately in earnest. Within a year, the church in which we now sit was erected and services resumed in what, I am sure, was a very bare bones sanctuary. At that first Christmas Eve service, the installation of the pipe organ was still months away, with the building finally seeing full completion and dedication in the year 1880.

IV.

I offer you this brief history because we are tempted to imagine that this sanctuary has *always* been here and, that perhaps it always will. However, as those parents in attendance tonight who have *grown* children can readily attest, time goes by very quickly indeed; and, with it, change comes to us all whether we like it or not. Though the years between toddlers in footie pajamas putting out cookies for Santa and the cap and gown of high school graduation felt as a plodding, slow march while walked now, looking back, it all seems to have passed far too quickly; in the twinkling of an eye. So, tonight, my message to you is to enjoy the twinkle.

V.

Each of us has come here this night fresh from our own ride through this world. The young are filled with eager anticipation of the things to come, and wish the ride to speed up even more so as to hasten them toward that for which they hope. A future which seems as a gift eager to be opened, wrapped with shining bow and fancy paper, being delivered to them as if by magic. Some of us simply hope the ride will slow down, even a little bit, that we might savor its joy as we are whisked through our days. Like finding one more present to unwrap amid the crumpled paper and opened boxes strewn about the floor. Finally, some of us have come to realize the ride we had hoped for is the same as the ride we have taken and there is no stopping it now. That the joy lies not in what we *had* hoped to receive, but from whatever gifts the years

have *already* given us. And they have truly given us so very much; with, perhaps, a bit more yet to come.

VI.

Regardless, though, of where we are and what we are doing relative to this time in our lives, we all share in the mystery of the joy and hope which is to be found in very this moment; in this *particular* twinkling of the eye here, tonight, on Christmas Eve. In this evening's scripture reading from his first letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul speaks of this mystery which started to unfold at the beginning of the world, at the beginning of time itself; when the earth was without form and void, and the darkness was on the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said, "Let there be light." And there *was* light. Millions of years passed by, time marched on, but even as people walked in great darkness the mystery was never forgotten, as it echoed again and again down through the centuries, spoken of here and there, in words and whispers of a promise, that a child would be born to us.

VII.

As the generations continued to rise and fall, the hope remained, but the search seemed to have long since stopped until, one night, a star appeared, rising in the East, and it came to rest over the little town of Bethlehem where there, down below lying in a manger, the mystery was renewed in a child born to be King, Lord and Savior. And yet, the mystery did not end there; as that child grew, it only deepened. Teaching us to love one another; as he loved, and died for us, too. That through him we might be redeemed by his light, which is the light of the world.

Then, as with all things, time seemed to fade this great memory of what had happened, of what had been done for us. But, still, in the human heart the mystery yet lingers and remains as a hope waiting to spring forth in every possible moment beckoning to be released by the twinkling of an eye.

VIII.

And there is no greater twinkle of an eye than that of a child at Christmas, and of parents striving to keep pace with the joy they have brought to this world, and of friends and families gathering to feast and celebrate regardless of what time has brought them, and as this fellowship of believers which joins together here each year in this old church to welcome the light into our hearts

and back to our world as, together, we recount, sing of, and remember the mystery that is God with us.

A poor mystery it would be, however, if it only ever just arrived & dwelt among us. For this mystery has the power, too, to change us, and to shepherd us away to a place where time no longer holds sway. Behold, I have told you a mystery this night, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (trumpet blown). Amen. Merry Christmas.