

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
Advent 1  
Romans 13:11-14  
November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014

It can be truly astonishing how fast life as we know it can change. Life changes in an instant when we hear the diagnosis. Life changes in an instant when we hear the news, you're pregnant. It changes in an instant when a loved one passes away quickly and unexpectedly. Those are just a few examples we have all experienced in one way or another.

However, life also changes quickly when the world around us changes quickly. For example in 1929, in early September, the stock market crashed and the great depression began. Or, on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1941 when bombs began to rain down on Pearl Harbor. Or, of course, in more recent times, remembering how we felt and how we viewed the world and others on the date of and after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. These dates changed history and they changed lives and continued to be remembered.

Are we today heading for some history-making event that will be a reference point for generations to come? Are we heading for an event about which our children and grandchildren will say, "That event changed the course of history, and changed our lives." We do not know the answer to that question, of course. Yet we are living in those days that precede an event we know is going to happen. That event is the coming again of Jesus Christ. The same Lord who made His advent into our world in the birth of our Savior, and who made His advent into our hearts, by faith is going to come again in judgment and bring this world to a close.

In the Gospel text for this first Sunday in Advent we see how the Lord is actually bringing His earthly ministry to a close. He enters triumphantly into the Holy City for the last time. This might seem like a strange reading for the first Sunday of the Church year. However, Advent is a more than a season where we look forward to little baby in the manger. What is better is to look forward at how Jesus makes all things complete and, keeping His promise, will come again. We already know that Jesus is born. We might look forward to the celebration of Christmas, but not the actual birth of Jesus. That has already happened. We look forward in Advent to His coming again. That will be a joyous coming for us Christians.

That Advent Joy is what St. Paul writes about to the Romans when he says, "*Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*" Paul speaks of fulfilling the law through love. Put off darkness and put on light, he says. The reason, "*the night is far gone and the day is at hand.*" What is that day? That day is the last day and for Christians that last day is not a day of darkness but a day of light. So Paul says, "*Live today as if today was that day.*" Live today as children of light who have on the armor of light. There is no doubt how God wants us to live. He paints this picture for us throughout Scripture. We live like today is the day when we will meet up with Him. As if today we are going to look our maker in the face. That's the way Christians live. We are to live like life can change in an instant. And, that instant may be today or right now.

Just think how every instant of the Lord's Holy procession into the grand city of Jerusalem was life-changing. Every step of that beast of burden with Jesus on top, every palm branch waved. Who knows who it was that came to faith while shouting, Hosanna." Who knows which child it was that had the blessed pleasure of seeing Jesus each of those days of Holy Week... and even on the day of His crucifixion – hearing the crowds. Who knew? Certainly not those who thought perhaps Jesus was too good to die like that. Certainly not those who were just hanging around to see Jesus throw fire down from heaven on the enemies of Israel

that Passover celebration. They were in for a surprise. There are too many who believe they can just live how they want and be a Christian. We live like a pagan for 6 days a week and then live like a Christian on the seventh.

A couple of weeks ago at the Missouri District Church Professional Conference I heard a very interesting sectional from Clint Colwell, a Youth Worker at Redeemer Lutheran in Springfield. He made a very good point about the youth of today – and I think this has filtered into our Christian lives as adults as well. He mentioned how we “compartmentalize” our Christianity. He gave an illustration of a house. When we have visitors to our house we are proud to display our well-kept living room, dining room, and whatever other rooms we have on the main floor. Also in the house is all sorts of stuff that we want, stuff that is meaningful, but don’t want people to see all the time. We keep that stuff in the attic. There are times we go up in the attic and bring things down to the main floor, show it off for a little while (like our decorations), but then when that time of “display” is over, we will put it back up in the attic, not to be seen or used until another time.

The way we treat our Christian lives is a lot like that. Too often we bring our Christianity out once a week on Sundays. Otherwise, we keep it in the attic. Oh sure, it’s not too far from us, all we have to do is go up and get it, but it’s not in our front room all the time. Too many other things occupy our front room. We have so much, “stuff” and often that stuff is what the world loves, to make room for the faith that we have stuffed up in the attic. So, when we see our friends and family who are Christians behaving badly, we think, along with them, “Well, that’s not acceptable to God, but as long as he brings his faith down from the attic on Sunday, that’s okay.” When we conspire, behave badly, live the way God intended us not to, it’s easy for any of us to think, “I can live contrary to God’s will, as long as I pray every once in a while – or – people see me at Church every once in a while. They will remember that I’m a Christian and God will remember me too.”

Why would we live contrary to God’s will? Why would we live as people who is loved by God and yet put our faith in the attic only get it down and put it in the front room of our lives on occasion? Beloved, we cannot live this way. We need to live as if each day is a day we anticipate our Lord’s coming again. Advent reminds us of this. We do not live as children of darkness – like people who have a house filled with nothing that matters. But rather, we live as Children of light – with our faith out of the attic and in the front room of our lives. God Himself pierces into this world to remind us that He is with us, that He never leaves us, that He came to save and desires to be a part of your life – the way you live – each minute of the hour of the day – each day.

Beloved, life changes in an instant. And that is true for your eternal life as well. *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoptions as sons. At just the right time, in an instant, God was given to you into death. With death on a cross – with words that deliver the promise, “It is finished,” on that cross, the Lord takes that moment of life and gives it to you for eternal life. You live in the light, so that you can live each day as what you are – adopted sons and daughters through the death of our brother Jesus. Good Friday is the day that changed the course of history and changed our lives – forever. Amen.*

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.