

November 28th, 2010
Sermon for the First Sunday in Advent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Romans 13:11-14

Romans 13:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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¹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version*. Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Usually when we head out on a trip, we at least have an idea of where we are going and how to get there, if not, you could easily find yourself in trouble on down the road. Well, today we are beginning a journey and we **do** know where we are going and how to get there.

We are going to Jerusalem and traveling there in Christ. We know this because we have clothed ourselves with Christ. He has gone before us and shown us the way to Jerusalem. We followed Him in our Baptism to His cross; we rested with Him in the tomb, and rose with Him to a life that never ends.

As we begin another year of God's Grace, marked by the beginning of the new church year, we know our celebration of Christ's Bethlehem at Christmas is only a stop on the way to our destination in Jerusalem, as we begin the journey to Jerusalem and a cross of Salvation.

We are beginning Advent, the time to clothe ourselves with Christ! Advent proclaims that Christ is near. Over the past few weeks, we have been concentrating on the end times. Since the New Testament era has begun, Christ's second coming has been seen as coming soon, for it is never farther away for each individual soul than the moment of death. We are reminded by the texts of the past few Sundays to be prepared ... because Christ's coming could be at any time.

But on this first Sunday of Advent, we see Christ's coming a little differently, looking at verse 11 in our text: "... *salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*"

Christ's coming is near to save us! His first coming that we are preparing for during Advent was not in Glory, but in humiliation, He secured our salvation. Jesus was born...in order to die. He humbled Himself to become a man, one of us, in order to live the perfect life that we cannot, and then He died for all of our sins.

This salvation is nearer for us every day! Church history tells us that in the First Century, people waited every day, in eagerness, for the return of Christ, we see Paul speaking of this in 2nd Thessalonians 2: we read,

"Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way".²

They were so looking forward to it that they were even afraid that they might have missed it so Paul calmed them down with these words and assured them that Christ's return was not something that someone could miss.

We don't live in the same eagerness of the Early Church, we still go to work or do our chores every day, but we should still share some of the excitement as we prepare for Christ's return. He is coming, much sooner than we expect.

²*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (2 Th 2:1-3). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

His return is near and we should clothe ourselves with Christ. It is by being clothed with Christ that we are able to look forward to His return and salvation.

Clothed with Christ, this is a nice illustration that Paul gives us, but what does it really mean? Paul tells us what our normal clothing consists of in our text, again we read:

“So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.”

We wouldn't want to meet Christ in the rags we wear, I'm not talking about the clothes on our backs but rather the sins that we wear, the very sins that He died for.

We would not want to be seen in public in the sins that we wear, much less by Christ, but He sees them all as in broad daylight. Paul is encouraging us to clothe ourselves in Jesus' righteousness.

We want to be the best that we possibly can, as if all of our actions and thoughts could be seen in the light of day.

We want to honor Christ in thought, word, and deed, to partake deeply of His Holy Spirit in the Scriptures and at His table. We want to honor Him with our bodies and take Him wherever we go, in all that we do. And we want to be at peace with everyone as if Jesus is there holding our hands, but we just can't do it on our own.

The only perfect man to ever live and walk the face of the earth is Jesus Christ. The Holy One of God! Always loving and saving, never hurting. This same Holy One laid down His body, gave His blood to be shed only for our eternal salvation, with nothing to gain for Himself but with so much to lose.

Jesus, This Prince of Peace, reconciled God to all mankind by His sacrifice on the cross.

This is what it means to be clothed with Christ, to take on His righteousness as our own, to be seen by God as perfect and sinless for the cause of Christ, through no merit of our own. Which brings us back to Advent.

Now is the time to clothe ourselves with Christ!

Advent proclaims that Christ is in you. When Paul tells us to clothe ourselves with Christ, he's not just saying it for now or in the future, but for all time. It's something that we should be trying to do today and every day.

In Galatians 3, Paul tells us: "*all of you who were baptized into Christ **have** clothed yourselves with Christ.*" This has already happened; it's a done deal. Everything that Christ accomplished by His first coming including His perfect life, sacrificial death, glorious resurrection, **has** been given to you in your Baptism!

We are clothed with Christ in our baptism. This makes us righteous, and beautifully dressed for the eternal celebration. By your baptism, Christ is in you—and He is seen in you as you go about your daily life, doing good things in His name.

And so the journey to Jerusalem begins. Christ is near to us. He is here with us because we are clothed with Him and you sit at His table. The Light of Christ has dawned! Listen to His voice, calling you to cast off the works of darkness and clothe yourselves with His light.

Amen.

The Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds unto Christ Jesus,

Amen.