

1st Sunday in Advent, Year A – November 28, 2010

Based on Romans 13:11-14 – written by Pastor Paul Horn - Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY

It's Time, High Time!

- 1. Time to wake up!**
- 2. Time to get dressed!**

Wake up! I know you're tired. You've stuffed your gullet with turkey and ham and all sorts of other treats, you've had late nights watching holiday movies and football, putting up your Christmas lights and decorations, the hours of shopping, the long holiday weekend off of work and school. You're tired! But it's not time to sleep. It's high time to wake up! Because you know what time it is! Now is the time... not for the Day after Thanksgiving sales, the hour has come for Christ, and he's coming soon! This is why we celebrate Advent. While we anticipate the celebration of Christmas and Christ's first coming to this earth in the flesh, we look forward and focus on Christ's final and second coming in the flesh, the Last Day. Christ's return creeps closer with each day that passes.

Since you understand the times you are living in, Paul says in our lesson, **"Do this..."** But do what, Apostle Paul? The sermon this morning is based on these four short verses in chapter 13, so we have to go all the back to the beginning of chapter 12 to understand why Paul is writing to the Christians living in Rome and to us today. At the beginning of chapter 12 he says, **"Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."** What follows this encouragement all through chapter 12 and spilling into chapter 13 is a list of how we will live as Christians.

"Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud. Do not be conceited. Live at peace with everyone. Then he sums everything up in the verses preceding our lesson by saying, **"Whatever commandments there may be are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as your self.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law."**

It's high time to wake up and show outwardly what is happening inward. We are saved by Christ, our lives will reflect that in the way we love each other.

Even though we are Christians, who have been saved from sins by the blood of Christ, Paul still feels the need to tell us to wake up. Just as your doctor reminds you that you should exercise and eat right to fight off obesity and all the diseases and health problems associated with it. "Duh, doc, I knew that!" But he/she knows it's hard for us to get off the couch or out from behind computer screen and jump up and do it, 'cause we're lazy! (Especially after Thanksgiving weekend). It's easier to just sit there. Sometimes we need a little motivation butt.

The same is true with your spiritual body. Paul says, **"Let us put aside the deeds of darkness."** Well, duh, Paul, we knew that. Paul knows this can be a problem for Christians. In chapter 12 Paul said that we will not conform anymore to the pattern of this world. (12.1-2) We are to hate the evil in the sinful world, and cling to

what is good. Sometimes it's hard to let go of the evil, because it's so much fun. And everybody else is doing it. So we get confused as to what is evil and what is good. And besides all that we find it's too much work to do the good that God requires from his people.

Read chapters 12-13 and you will notice the piling up of words for sins that show us the depths of depravity that the Romans had to deal with. As outwardly depraved as our culture is, it has not reached the outward perversions of first century A.D. Rome. The Apostle Peter himself is not silent about the wantonness of the city of Rome. In 1 Peter 4:4 he calls attention to **"the riotousness and vileness mingled with it."** In his commentary on Romans Luther says, "Everything, right or wrong, is mixed with insane raving, so that the city, now brought to the last insanity of corruption, seems to have cried to highest heaven either for apostles, and the greatest of them, or for a punishment like that of Sodom and Gomorrah." Sounds like our society today, doesn't it? That's why Paul says, "Wake up! Take notice of the deeds of darkness and the deeds of light!"

Not only do we experience attacks from the darkness outside of us, but also from within. As Christians, we still drag around wretched sinful nature, which corrupts our whole being. It causes us to be sleepy and lazy, we don't want to fight against the sinful flesh, and it's easier to give in. It's easier to hide the dark attitudes in our hearts, like the alcoholic who hides the bottle, the out-of-control spender who cannot cut up the credit card, the pornography addict is not willing to destroy the hard drive on his or her computer, the couple who is not married yet put themselves into situations that could lead to temptation, the individual who holds their anger and frustration in and doesn't address the issue.

My friends, if we are indifferent about the darkness of this wicked world, if we are apathetic about the seriousness of our sinful nature, then we are in danger of becoming like the rest of the world, lazy, and we will fall into spiritual slumber, which carry eternal consequences.

Paul calls for action, decisive action. He says, "Wake up!" It's high time to wake up from our spiritual slumber, to destroy our apathetic attitudes, and so he says, "It's time to get dressed!" Paul says, **"So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."** Sounds like warfare... If I'm going into battle, I will not wear my flip flops, khaki shorts and a polo shirt. Instead I will strap on my Kevlar helmet, body armor, combat boots, and always carry my rifle. Paul says, **"Put on the armor of light."** How do we do that? Always carry a flashlight? Paul says, **"Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ."**

The Lord Jesus is the armor of light, **"In whom there is no darkness at all."** (1John 1.5) If ever there was a man who presented himself before God as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God, more fully, more perfectly, that man is Christ Jesus. If ever there was a life in unbroken unity with God's commandments, it is the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who served, and died and rose, to the glory of God. Here, in Christ alone, we have one who did battle with the deeds of darkness, temptation, Satan, sinful world, and won every battle. Victorious in every battle, Christ Jesus won the war against darkness. He is the light of the world.

Clothe yourselves with light! In Galatians 3.27 Paul says, **"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ Jesus."** Through Holy Baptism you have been clothed with the light, Christ Jesus. His light covers over the darkness of your sins. His light scatters the evil attitudes of your heart. As

the hymnwriter Nicolaus von Zinzendorf so beautifully wrote, "Jesus, your blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress." (*Christian Worship* 376:1) Through faith, the righteousness that Christ won for us is ours. Adorned with that glorious robe, we stand before God with the righteousness that he requires for us to enter his kingdom of light. Having been wrapped in Jesus' light, we are assured of eternal life in heaven.

Being dressed with Christ's righteousness does much more. It enables us and empowers us to show outwardly what is happening inwardly. We will pay attention to Paul's plea, "It's time to wake up from our spiritual slumber. It's time to get dressed!" Because we know the times. We still live in the night. We are surrounded by sin, tempted by the devil, but we live as Christians. We walk, talk, live like people who believe that God loved them so much He died on the Cross for them. We don't use the excuse, "Everybody else is doing it," because we recognize the distinction between the night, and God's day.

We are aware of the enemies of darkness in our sinful world. We also still must contend with that which lives inside of us. Christians are still in the flesh. From the inherited, corrupt nature, evil desires grow naturally, like weeds that sprout overnight. How did these get here? I just sprayed the yard yesterday! So evil desires can easily become active and grow in them and affect the life in Christ. And so as children of the light we hear the call to wake Up and get dressed! But how do we dress with Christ everyday?

Martin Luther once said, "He who cherishes his flesh nourishes an enemy," and again on the other hand, "he who destroys his flesh kills a friend. But it is not the flesh but the vices of the flesh, that is, the lusts, which must be destroyed." We destroy the flesh, that is, the desires of our sinful nature, by getting dressed with Christ daily. We put Christ on anew daily with our Baptismal dress. We remember our baptisms everyday. And when we do that, we repent of our sins. Repentance means that we acknowledge that we have given in to the deeds of darkness. Our sinful nature doesn't like to hear that... Repentance also turns to the cross of Christ to seek his mercy and forgiveness, and Christ brings us that pardon. When we hear the good news that Christ lives in us, that his light covers over us, the sinful nature dies. Then we will not think about **how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature**. Turn to repentance and the cross everyday.

Because you know the times. We still live in the night, as Paul wrote. But he encourages us and says, "It's almost over. Your salvation is nearer now." We look forward to that day. While we wait with great joy and anticipation, we will wake up and we get dressed. Amen.