

Prayer of the Day:

Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Protect us by your strength and save us from the threatening dangers of our sins; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come Lord Jesus. Alleluia.
(Revelation 22:20 cf. NIV84)

Sermon Text:

It didn't happen often but I can recall very distinctly three occasions in which I overslept. I remember them because they occurred in college and they all were during one professors' class. We won't go into detail about the reaction I got when I walked in each time after class with my sincere apology. I will tell you that after the third occurrence even on a college budget, I decided to buy a new alarm clock. The other obviously wasn't cutting it. Each time, however, as I sleepily opened my eyes to the realization of what time it was the same thought rolled through my groggy brain, "**WAKE UP & GET DRESSED!**"

The Apostles Paul serves as our wake-up call in our second lesson as he encourages the same. So today by God's grace and through His means of grace, **WAKE UP & GET DRESSED! PUT ASIDE THE DARKNESS OF SIN WORN IN OUR WORLDLINESS. PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT FOUND ONLY IN CHRIST.**

Paul writes, "*And do this* (Paul has just finished speaking of obedience to the fourth commandment and this is kind of interesting given what's coming, the debt of love we owe to one another), *understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.*

Paul says it's time, as people bought by the blood of Christ, as people who have been given the gift of faith through the working of the Holy Spirit in Word and in Sacrament, as people whose eyes have opened on the salvation which God has given, it's time to live like all this has occurred. This is true not only because we are God's chosen people dearly loved and bought at great cost, but it is also true because everyday we exist on this earth is one day closer to the great and glorious day of judgment, whether that be by physical death in this world or should God return in glory before that day comes.

So Wake up! Do this! It's Urgent! But what does that look like? *So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

The imagery Paul now uses is of one changing their clothing. He tells us it's time to take of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor (or weaponry) of light. He even gets specific about what he is referring to. I find the pairing interesting as well. Orgies and drunkenness would both fall into the category of a misuse of the blessings God has given to mankind. But before we dive headlong into the abuses of Sex and Alcohol it may be interesting to note that the word is more along the lines of excessive feasting. Perhaps the idea is overindulgence of the materials of this life. Food and drink in massive excess was not uncommon in the celebration of the Romans people as they rejoiced in the power and

Text: Romans 13:11-14

¹¹ And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. – NIV84

wealth which was theirs as a nation. Perhaps that hits a bit close to home as we contemplate the excess of Thanksgiving followed by the frenzy of the materialism of Black Friday.

The next pairing looks very similar as well. *Not in sexual immorality and debauchery*, at first hearing sounds like a restatement of the previous pairing, however, now we have opportunity to speak not so much of the materialism and gluttony of our world but rather the way we often dive into excess for the sake of excess. That's really what debauchery is and it's not overly surprising that this often descends into a breaking of the 6th Commandment inside and outside of marriage. Interestingly, in context Paul is reminding us this is not living in love as many would claim today. To live in contrast to the Law of God is living in the darkness of sin and therefore the opposite of love, regardless what our sinfully twisted emotion may proclaim.

Finally, Paul writes *not in dissension and jealousy*. The second often leads to the first but if we are thinking of the love of God both of these are far less concerned with God or anyone else for that matter and have fallen completely in love with self. It's amazing how often, God's own people can be drawn into the gossiping, the character assassination, the wanton destruction of reputation as we seek to drive wedges between others so that we might look better.

Ultimately, the list is not complete, we could include our own pet sins, our own worship of material, emotion or self. If it sits counter to God and His holy Word, Paul would urge us to wake up and take of the cruddy old clothes of sin.

But truthfully now, that's hard is it not? I struggle regularly with this concept of repentance. That's really what Paul is pointing too here. To really be done with sin, to take it off and throw it aside, well, I'm a sinner and even when in lucid moments I realize the wickedness of the actions, my sinful nature craves everything God would have me keep in balance. So what's the answer to the everyday struggle?

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. It's not at all surprising that once more we find ourselves standing before the Cross. Oh, I know its advent and the Christmas music is bumping in the shopping centers of the world but that manger, and the baby Jesus didn't come to help us bolster our economies as we over indulged on our own dreams. He comes because of the struggle, to save us from ourselves, to make His way to the cross.

Consider the way Martin Luther spoke in the meaning of Holy Baptism. *Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean? Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Where is this written? St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

This is the Armor of light, the life of faith, gifted to us by our God as He works through the means of grace. It is life born into the struggle between the Old Adam and the New Man. In our Baptisms we have clothed ourselves with Christ, gifted His perfection so that we no longer have any need to earn our salvation. His holy precious blood has washed us clean cancelling our sins, our wickedness as we have craved our own pet sins, our own worship of material, emotion or self. In Christ, all is done, and we are free to live. Not in the wickedness of the darkness of sin, but alive in the forgiveness of Christ.

This is life lived in the shadow of the Cross. Life in the struggle against sin. Life lived awake from the slumber and prepared for the coming of our God, whether prepared to celebrate His first coming at Christmas as is often the focus this time of year or prepared for His final return, when He comes to take His people, you and me, into glory. So today, God uses the pen of the Apostle Paul to once again encourage all of us, **WAKE UP & GET DRESSED!** through His gifts, given and purchased at the cross, **PUT ASIDE THE DARKNESS OF SIN WORN IN OUR WORLDLINESS. PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT FOUND ONLY IN CHRIST.** Amen.