

Romans 13:11-14 The Advent Call: Wake Up! November 27-28, 2016 Advent 1

By Pastor Kenneth Mellon, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Pleasant Valley Rd., West Bend, WI

Grace and peace have come to us from God our Father from Jesus Christ who came as our Savior!

God's Word to wake us from the spiritual sleep of sin is written in Romans 13:11-14

These are Your words heavenly Father to prepare us for Christ's advent. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Friends in our coming Savior,

We have begun the season of Advent. The word Advent means coming. During this season, we prepare to celebrate Jesus' first coming to do away with sin. But in Advent we also rejoice that Christ came to us through the Gospel so we trust in Him to save us. And we are preparing for His final coming by finding true joy in Him. Are we prepared for His coming? Do we desire to be in heaven more than to stay in this life, like Paul wanting to see the Lord? We may think that it's too soon to go because we have relationships we don't want to end or we have things to accomplish. Yet, we always should be ready to go and not be too attached to things or people in this world. Remember Lot's wife? God's angels brought Lot and his family out of Sodom before it was destroyed, but Lot's wife looked back to the city longing for what she had there. She died, never to enjoy the new freedom God offered. We want be ready and we will be if we hear:

The Advent Call: Wake Up!

First, realize what time it is! Paul wrote, *"Do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is near...."* (v.11) All of us at some time have either heard an alarm or heard: It's time to get up! It's not good if we miss hearing those words or forget to set the alarm to wake us. We wake up in a panic. We rush about or make calls to tell people that we'll be late to work or school. Paul does not want this to happen to us spiritually, because being late for Jesus' second coming means that we missing it completely and are left outside of heaven.

Paul assures us that the time for the end is soon. It seems strange to say "soon" when we know that Paul was inspired to write this letter nearly 2,000 years ago. But, whether Jesus returns tomorrow or in 25 years, we need to be ready now. If He doesn't return to end the world soon, He could come at any moment to end our lives. Through the Gospel we were brought to faith in Jesus and we are traveling on the road to our destination. If you are in the passenger seat, you can sleep. If you are the driver, you must be away so you don't miss a turn or might even get in an accident. Sleeping could lead to serious trouble!

What kind of sleep is Paul describing? This sleep is when the devil or our sinful nature entraps us in a sinful thought or behavior. There will always be temptations and we will sin. But, we are in serious trouble when sin takes control of our thinking or actions, or replaces our love for God with love with anything else, like Judas. Before we know it we could lose Christ's free forgiveness. How could this happen? It happens that we don't consider our sinful actions seriously. It's like going to the zoo and getting close to the open bars of a lion's cage not realizing the lion's reach. So the devil is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Our faith is under attack right now! Sadly, for many it is not a priority to hear God's Word or to pray or read the Bible. Wake up! Paul warns. The end could come and we may not be ready by faith!

Second, wake up and make a change. In vs. 12-13 Paul warns, *"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. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."* (v.12-13) The devil is constantly looking for weaknesses in us. And when he finds them, he uses them to turn our focus away from the goal of heaven to our sinful desires. In writing to the Romans, Paul knew that in Rome there were official gatherings of out-of-control sinning or times where sexual sinning was encouraged or there was much bitterness and envy among Romans. But, God called those in Christ not to follow the example of these "deeds of darkness." They could seriously harm

Christians. So, through faith in Christ we are children of the light! We realize that whatever sins we're tempted with are not substitutes for what God offers in Christ. Why turn back to anything less than eternal life with God?

Paul mentions taking off the acts of darkness. It is like changing clothes. First, we need to realize that by nature we are not prepared for Christ's coming. So we put off our old nature and our sin and replace it with what can protect us, Christ's life and death. When David prepared to fight Goliath, King Saul gave him his armor. But, David couldn't even move in it. It didn't fit! Instead He depended on God to defend him and he won the victory! So, rather than sin, we are depend on Christ's forgiveness. Rather than live for our sinful nature, we are living for Christ and helping others prepare for His coming. Paul tells us to repent of our sins and help others to do the same. Jude wrote, "*Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear....*" (1:23)

Our habits may need to change: like changing the channel if a TV show leads us to sin. We won't go to internet sites that are filled with temptations. We will change what we are doing with friends if they are hurting our faith. Paul wrote, "*Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*" (v.14) Putting on Christ by faith means that we leave no room for sin to stay in us. We'll still be tempted, but we won't let sin control us. We have Christ. Paul wrote, "*We were therefore buried with him 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.*" (Romans 6:4) In Christ we will make a positive difference for other people as God gives us the opportunities to help them to wake up to His saving truths!

Third, we look forward to the new day! Paul wrote, "*Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*" (v.11) He is writing about our final salvation, when Christ will end this sinful world and make a new heaven and earth as the home for the righteous. Like Paul, we get frustrated when *the good we want to do, we don't do and evil we don't want to do, we keep doing.* (Romans 7:19) We live by faith knowing that in Christ God sees us as covered in Christ's perfection so that we are accepted in His sight. Whenever the day of judgment comes, we'll be ready because we have Christ as our only Savior.

We look forward to His coming. What are times that people look forward to something: a wedding, a birth, or Christmas day when it's time for children open their presents? Whatever it is, if its something good, we look forward to that day! With Christ as our Savior, we look forward to all that He will do for us on the Last Day. Now, we are living in the darkness of this evil world where there is pain, trouble, sickness, daily news of evil attacks, and of people inflicting harm on one another. The devil sadly affects this life.

But, at Christ's return the devil and all his evil will be banished. We will be in the light of Jesus' perfection, not just by faith but to fully experience it! We will see Jesus in all His glory and we will share in His glory that will never end. Our best day of life here where everything seems to go well will in no way compare to the joy, honor, beauty, and perfection that we will have with Christ forever!

So, as Advent begins, we want to be awake. It's time to be awake so temptations don't keep us out of heaven! Be awake to Christ's forgiveness won by His life and death and offered to us freely. Be awake to our future: a heavenly home of pure light! The time is coming. Look now by faith to Christ alone. Amen.