

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:36-44

Do you know what time it is? It's the beginning of Advent! The Christmas trees have already been up in the stores for a month, or more, now. Christmas will be here before you know it.

Christmas is coming and this is our wake up call. We have to get ready for Christmas. We have to send the cards, plan the parties, buy the presents and deck the halls with boughs of holly.

Christmas is closer than when we first saw it coming. So get ready!

But, before we get lost in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, let's stop to consider God's Word. It's a wake up call from God. Paul writes, "Don't you know what time it is? The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed". In his Letter to the Romans, Paul outlined for the Christians in Rome, the message of the Gospel. Here, near the end of the Letter to the Romans, Paul is getting to the reality of the second coming. Jesus is coming again to vindicate the faithful, and bring judgment on the wicked.

Look, we don't know when Jesus is coming back. In fact Jesus said that he didn't know, only the Father in heaven knew. But no matter when he is coming, the date is always getting closer.

So we need to be ready.

Now, at this point you might feel like interrupting me to say, "Wait a minute; I thought we were talking about Christmas".

Well believe it or not, it's all tied together. The name of this season in the Church calendar is Advent. The word "advent" means coming. It refers to Jesus coming as a little baby born in Bethlehem. But it is also about Jesus' second coming. When Jesus came the first time he brought light into the darkness and Jesus has been bringing light into the darkness of people's hearts and souls ever since. But he is coming again to bring light into the darkness of the world.

Advent happens at the time of the year when it is getting darker outside, to remind us that the light is coming. The night of human sinfulness and lostness is almost over. The night of the tyranny and oppression of the soul and body is almost over. The dawn of freedom and liberation from sin, death, and the evil of this age, is about to break. The dawn of Jesus' second coming is about to break, and we better get ready. This is our wake up call. Are we awake?

But how do we get ready? It's not about Christmas decorations or presents. Paul said, "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature". I hope we don't need to be reminded to not to be involved in drunkenness, sexual immorality, dissension and jealousy. But just in case we do: Don't do it!

That being said, more important than the don'ts, here is what St. Paul tells us to do. "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ". The Letter to the Romans also says that we should put on the armor of light. What is it that covers our heart? Is it our personal wants and desires? Or is it love for God and our neighbor. We need to cover our life with Jesus Christ.

Some people feel lost without their watch. We have clocks everywhere, there was a time when our watch was the only clock, and receiving a watch as a gift, was a rite of passage. But we wear our watch all the time, except when we take a shower.

So once in a blue moon we forget to put it on after our shower, and we leave for work without our watch, and to be totally honest, we feel lost without it. Some people are like that about their cell phones. They feel lost without them.

So, in the morning each day put on Christ. Open our heart and wear Christ, not as an accessory that can be interchanged with other accessories, but as an essential. Make Jesus the primary garment for the heart and soul.

The story goes that a man had a bad habit of falling asleep in church. The preacher's feelings were hurt that this guy wouldn't stay awake for his sermons, so he decided to fix the man's wagon. He was about ten minutes into his sermon and the guy was sound asleep. So he quietly said, "Ok, everyone, who wants to go to heaven raise your hand". Everyone in the church raised their hands, except that one guy who, as usual, was having a nap. Then the preacher said, "Now everyone who wants to go to hell", and he shouted, "STAND UP"! The guy shot out of his pew and stood up. He rubbed his eyes and looked around. Then he said, "Preacher I don't know what we's votin' on, but you and me seems to be the only ones in favor of it".

Wake up! If we've been asleep, we are not voting on going to Hell. But we are voting on not going there. We live in a dark world. If there is any doubt in your mind, just watch the news.

But the light is coming. Jesus is coming again. The day of his dawning is closer now than it has ever been.

So, let us clothe ourself in Christ and the armor of light. Sure, we can get ready for Christmas, and we need to. But more

importantly, get ready for Jesus' return. Give our life to Christ. If we have never asked Jesus to forgive our sins and come into our heart, than do it today. If we have, then devote each day to living His love, His grace and His forgiveness. This is our wakeup call from God!

AMEN.