

**First Sunday in Advent**

**December 1, 2019**

# **“Living In Light”**

**Romans 13:11-14**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Knowing the time, knowing that we are in the hour before the end of it all and the coming of Jesus, it is time to rise from sleep. Who then is the sleeper? In a sermon on our lesson, Luther says:

The sleeper sees nothing about him; he is not sensitive to any of earth's realities. In the midst of them he lies as one dead, useless; as without power or purpose. Though having life in himself he is practically dead to all outside. Moreover, his mind is occupied, not with realities, but with dreams, wherein he beholds mere images, vain forms, of the real; and he is foolish enough to think them true. But when he wakes, these illusions or dreams vanish. Then he begins to occupy himself with realities; phantoms are discarded. (Martin Luther, *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol 6, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995, pg. 11)

So, are you a sleeper? A sleeper is one who lives in "works of darkness (Rom. 13:12)." The list that Paul gives in this section (13:13) are these: immoral/wild parties, getting drunk, sinful sexual relations, sinful gratification of the senses, heated arguments and quarreling, jealousy/envy/resentment. When a person comes to faith in Jesus and the forgiveness of sins, they are not supposed to revert to a life of willful sin or "sleeping." Paul writes in the sixth chapter of Romans (verses 1-2): "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

Again, are you a sleeper? Do you love sin and practice sinning? The apostle John writes, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning ... (1 John 3:9a)." And the apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not enter the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived ... (1 Cor. 6:9-11)." Loving sin and willfully practicing it is to live an illusion or dream. Indeed! It is a phantom - a figment of the imagination - to think that doing what is wrong is ok. This is all so very hard for us to digest, because we are living in a culture where people see issues of right and wrong as merely gray areas with little or no consequence. Most churches today have fallen into the same trap. "Enough!" Paul says in our epistle lesson to the Christians in Rome. "Wake up! Arise! Put on the Lord Jesus Christ!" Again, Luther:

So it is in the spiritual life. The ungodly individual sleeps. He is in a sense dead in the sight of God. He does not recognize - is not sensitive to - the real spiritual blessings extended him through the Gospel; he regards them as valueless. For these blessings are only to be recognized by the believing heart; they are concealed from the natural man. The ungodly individual is occupied with temporal, transitory things, such as luxury and honor, which are to eternal life and joy as dream images are to flesh-and-blood creatures. (Ibid., pg. 11)

Is that you? If not, be careful that it doesn't become you! As it is written: "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12)." Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Jesus is at the door. The heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire for the judgment and destruction of the ungodly (2 Pet. 3:7). Shall any of us be like Lot's wife? Did not one of the messengers say to her and the rest of her family at the dawn of the morning, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away (Gen.

19),” and did she not look back when the sun had risen, and for her the darkness of sin and death flooded her eyes as she became a pillar of salt? Our Lord Jesus Christ has warned us saying, “Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it (Luke 17:33).”

Our epistle lesson for this morning says that we are to “wake from sleep” and “cast off [or take off from ourselves] the works of darkness.” We are to “put on [or clothe ourselves with] the armor of light” and “put on [or clothe ourselves with] the Lord Jesus Christ.” When we first came to faith, God’s salvation dawned on us and we were saved. As Paul writes, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).” The source and power of our baptisms is the baptism of Jesus. In the Jordan, he who is sinless was set apart to wear the dark clothing of our sin and shame and carried it to the cross to be nailed there forever. It is through his sacrifice that he is enabled to give us himself as our clothing of righteousness and the forgiveness of sins. It is in the waters of baptism where the clothing of our salvation has been given. As it says in Titus 3:4-7,

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

All of us who have been baptized in Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death. As Paul writes in Romans 6:4, “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” By faith, and with the anticipation of the full day of salvation when this dark age is past, we walk as though the night of this age of sin and death, suffering and failure, is far gone. We live in “newness of life,” as if the day of the Lord is here. To live as if we are in the day involves then a struggle. It calls for decisive action. We are called upon to cast off the works of darkness and take up the armor of light. Armor means a battle against the forces of darkness.

When we are aroused from sleep by faith, and filled with anticipation for the end of the night, we present our bodies to God who is Light, in whom “there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).” As we live in the midst of immoral/wild parties, getting drunk, sinful sexual relations, sinful gratification of the senses, heated arguments and quarreling, and jealousy/envy/resentment, we battle - we struggle - to live in radiant decency. In his commentary on *Romans*, Martin H. Franzmann writes:

Such a life is possible only for men who are clothed in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is their armor of light that can overcome all powers of darkness. They have been clothed by Him by Baptism (Gal. 3:27), therefore they can be bidden to take up the given gift, to put Him on anew. Their baptism is to become their daily dress. In Baptism they have participated in His death and resurrection; in Christ they have reached the frontiers of the world to come. Only in Him can they find the strength to live on that frontier as in the day. In Him they can find strength to speak a constant no to the importunities of the flesh, the futureless flesh with its



desires that hold men fast within this world. To “provide for the flesh” is a contradiction in terms: such pro-vision is no foresight at all, for it looks no farther than this dark and dying world (pg. 240).

**Living in Light** is the theme of this First Sunday in Advent. This can only be by faith in Jesus. Living in the clothing of light, who is Christ, we “make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Paul writes in the book of Ephesians:

Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:9-17).

So, what will it be? **Living in the Light**, or loving the illusion of sin and practicing it? We all need to deal with this, for as Paul writes, “the hour has come.” At least, that is how we are to clearly see it. And, to know God’s hour is to be roused from sleep. The Christian life is a conscious, a waking and waiting life. It is **Living in the Light**.

Amen.

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