

The Hour Has Come  
Romans 13:11-14

As we gather on this first Sunday in Advent, we all have something in common. Whether we wanted to or not, we all woke up this morning. And so far, you are all doing a good job of staying awake. Another thing we have in common is that none of us wondered to ourselves this morning, “Should I get dressed to go to church?” Maybe you spent some time deciding what to wear, but you knew without thinking about it that clothing was not optional.

Do you know that by waking up and getting dressed you were preparing yourself for Jesus to return? St. Paul writes: *[Y]ou know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

To be ready for Christ’s glorious return, Paul’s first point is that we wake from sleep. Now, when some people hear their alarm and wake from sleep they can jump right out of bed and say, “Good morning, Lord!” There are others who hear their alarm, and without even bothering to move or open their eyes think, “Good Lord, it’s morning.”

At Jesus’ Second Advent there will, likewise, be two different responses. Some will rejoice at the Lord’s return. Others will greet it with dread. To be among those who rejoice, Paul says, we are to wake up from sleep. We are

to be alert as to who Jesus is and that He could return at any time.

He has spent chapter after chapter, in Romans, talking about sin and grace. The short version is this: *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith (3:21-25).*

When Paul writes, in our text, make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires he isn’t saying don’t take care of your body. Yes, when you are hungry, eat. Yes, when you are sleepy, go to bed. Yes, wear clothes fitting for the season. Yes, meet the needs of your body. When Paul talks about the desires of the flesh he is referring to the desires of our sinful nature. He mentions some of them in our text: *orgies and drunkenness, sexual immorality and sensuality, quarreling and jealousy.* Living in these things is the opposite of being awake. These are the clothing of darkness that we are to cast off to be replaced with the armor of light.

So, is being awake and wearing clothes enough to be ready for Jesus’ Second Coming? If we know that someday Jesus will return and we do our best to put off the clothes of darkness and put on the clothes of light, is

that enough? Will we be truly ready to greet Jesus with rejoicing? ... No.

Maybe you have had a version of this dream. You dream that show up at work or school or church and you have forgotten to change out of your pajamas. How embarrassing. How ashamed you feel. Or maybe in your version of the dream you aren't wearing anything at all. The degree of embarrassment and shame is awful.

If we rely on our own efforts to be prepared for Christ's return, the embarrassment and shame will be unimaginable. All of our best efforts, says Isaiah are like filthy rags (64:6).

To be properly dressed for the day of Jesus' coming, we must be clothed with a garment provided by Jesus Himself. To avoid being ashamed on the Day of Christ, we must be clothed by Christ.

The irony of this robe of righteousness is that Jesus earned it for us while He was naked. Naked and bleeding – nailed to a cross – Jesus suffered and died for us. Jesus took on Himself all of our guilt and shame. He clothed Himself with your sin to take it away from you and pay its price. Jesus suffered the torment of hell and death. He experienced being completely cut off from the love of His heavenly Father. And He did it out of love for you, so that He might clothe you with His own righteousness.

That is what Jesus has done for you. He has taken away your sin stained clothes and replaced them with His own

robe of righteousness. He clothed many of you with this robe at a very young age – in your baptism. That is one of the promises made that we saw fulfilled for Josie Trainor last Sunday. She was washed in the water of Holy Baptism. God's Spirit delivered to her Christ's blood bought gifts. The Holy Spirit made His dwelling in her, bringing faith, and the forgiveness of sins.

You, also are a baptized child of God. You have received the promised gifts of faith and the forgiveness of sins. You have been clothed with Christ's robe of righteousness. You will not be ashamed when He returns. You will rejoice at His coming. And it could be any time now.

A very responsible middle school boy got up each morning just before five to deliver newspapers. His alarm would wake him up, and he would get dressed for the conditions of the day. The grandfather clock chiming 5:00 in the living room would let him know it was time to head out. One morning he heard it chime, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – nothing unusual. But it didn't stop. It chimed on 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 – the boy was confused. "What's going on here?" But it still didn't stop 13, 14, 15, 16 17, and on and on! Obvious to us, the clock was broken, but this child came to a different conclusion. He rushed into his parents' bedroom and cried out, "Mom, Dad, wake up! It's later than it has ever been before!"

St. Paul says to us, [T]he hour has come. It is time for us to wake up and dress up in Christ's robe of righteousness. It is later than it has ever been before. Amen.