

“IT’S TIME TO GET UP”

Romans 13:11-14

Intro

This morning’s passage is all about preparation, and since we have entered the season of Advent, the four Sundays prior to Christmas, this is not at all a surprise.

However, the preparation is not as we have come to interpret it in our current rendition of modernity. When we talk about Christmas preparation in the current climate people think about putting up the Christmas tree with all of its lights and decorations. We think of decorating the outside of the house in some way so that it might help to display the light of the season. We think of putting things up all throughout the house in order to create that special Christmas feeling. And, of course, we think of all gifts that need to be purchased, wrapped, shipped, ect., ect., in order to share our affection toward our friends and family. That’s what we think of in terms of preparation.

That is not how our scripture is calling for us to prepare. What our passage says to us is that it is time to wake up, time to wake up to the reality that the day of Christ’s return is ever closer to the day that we now enjoy. Some of you may be wondering why this would be the tact that is taken by the theologians who put the lectionary together, especially considering that we are trying to get ready for Christmas, the birth of Jesus, and not Easter, where we celebrate his resurrection.

I answer such a query this way: we talk about this sort of preparation because our eyes should always be fixed upon where God is ultimately leading us, and while the Christmas celebrations are wonderful reminder of where we come from and how we have come together, it is not where we are ultimately going.

Now, sitting here in church on a Sunday morning, we can all give, at the very least, a half hearted, “yeah, I can go along with that. We need to stay focused on Jesus return”.

However, when we are faced with all of the societal expectations that do come with Christmas, is looking toward the end time really practical?

I believe it is, if we understand how we are to look at it, and our lives. This passage is a wonderful reminder of that very thing. The scripture reads this way.

Read Romans 11:13-14

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

“It’s Time to Get Up”

I don’t know how your house runs in the morning, but school mornings in the Nace-Gabriel household are built on routine. The alarm goes off (several times and a two different ways) and then the light clicks on. Jen goes one direction to rouse the older boy while I go the other to start working on the younger. At this point, the machine is so well-oiled that you can guess within a minute or two when each of us will enter into the kitchen, when breakfasts will be done, teeth brushed, shoes on, and children out the door to the bus and then the day for the adults begin. We know what needs to be done and it gets done in a very familiar ritualized daily pattern

I know that many of you have similar experiences in that you go through those moments when you really aren’t even thinking. Stuff is getting done, but you’re running on autopilot.

For example, my brother and I were driving up to Poughkeepsie, New York a few months ago to attend a concert. We were driving on the Thruway and had just passed the exit for Interstate 84. We were going to be taking the next exit which is 15 miles further down the road.

After a few miles, I became distracted with some texts and phone calls that I needed to return. When I finally looked up and plugged in to what was in front of me I saw the Catskill Mountains, which are pretty, but not what I was expecting to see. I asked my brother, ‘Joel, where are we?’ He took about half a second too long and replied, ‘I really don’t know’. After chatting with Google Maps for a minute, we realized that Joel had driven right by the exit and was half way to Kingston (the next exit after the one that we needed to take!).

Yup, like that.

We disconnect.

Unfortunately, the Christmas season is experienced by many of us in the exact same way: we know what we have to do and we get it done but we’ve done it so many times before that we do the autopilot thing. Thanksgiving ends and the first thing that I think is, time to get out the Christmas tree and all the decorations. And considering that we aren’t putting up the tree until next weekend...well, that really messed with me!

Paul, the author of Romans, is picking up on this reality that as the days, weeks, and months draw his readers and us here today farther and farther away from the actual life of Jesus, we operate more and more out of a prescribed reaction, rather than actually appreciating what is being revealed. This is why Paul says that, “we need to wake from sleep”. He’s saying that we need to wake up and stop doing the whole thing where we are just going through the motions, that we need to plug into what is actually going on around us because if we do that, then, from a position of faith, we will be protected with the ‘armor of light’.

But again, we need to wake up and focus on where God is ultimately leading us.

So how do we do that? How do we plug into where God is leading us?

Well, to begin with, I think the biggest hurdle is that we become focused on the wrong things.

We do one of two things, we either do the autopilot thing (that I talked about a few minutes ago), or we see all the stuff that needs to be done in the day and that that's all we're able to see.

In both cases we are not able to see God.

Speaking to the latter and being completely candid with ourselves, how many of us write the whole mental (or actual) list and before we even get started doing any of it we begin thinking, "how am I ever going to get this done?" We haven't even started and we are already a step and a half behind. When we approach the world this way the likelihood that we will be able to see the movement of God is greatly diminished, because we are not awake to God, only to the issues that face us.

In both cases we need to flip it! We need to be focused on God first because as we do that we are then able to experience God moving in the midst of even the mundane parts of the lists that we put together.

And here's a simply way to begin to do that very thing.

Pick a time during the day: schedule it; set an alarm for it; have someone send you a text reminding you of it, but at that prescribed time of the day remind yourself that, "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let me rejoice and be glad in it." We've mentioned this idea before, but it's especially important as we head into the rhythm of a season that can pull us into levels of emotional overload that are anything but healthy.

As we remind ourselves who made the day, we are reminded of the fact that whether we live or die, we are the Lord's, and that by recognizing that we are held by the Lord, we are able to become all the more plugged into, all the more cognizant of the blessings that God is in the midst of revealing.

MR DeVelder Thanksgiving Feast; Emily and Dan walk in on Wednesday just as Sophie Hoopes needed a nurse.

Paul called for us to wake up and place on the armor of light for the day of salvation is rapidly approaching. I'm not going to stand up here and tell you that I know when Jesus is going to return because I don't. People have been making those predictions since the day that Jesus has ascended into heaven and thus far, they've all been wrong. Two thousand years later we are still waiting.

And yet, we still have the call to remain prepared and diligent, not living a defeated life that sees us stuck in autopilot or burdened by the expectations that we have placed upon ourselves or by others. A way that we can do this, both for this season of Advent and for all the seasons of the year, is by reminding ourselves who has blessed us with the day: "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let me rejoice and be glad in it."

Pick your time, whatever time works for you, and put on the armor of light by focusing on God. We need to rejoice and be glad in this day that we have been blessed with!

We have a choice as to how we approach our days. We can go through on autopilot, we can become burdened down, or we can rise above it by allowing God to lift us up. Won't you prepare to make today, tomorrow, and the next the best days that they can be?

Take a few seconds to remind yourself, "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let me rejoice and be glad in it."

After Sermon Prayer

Holy God, in the midst of the very familiar, and the never-ending, we have a tendency to forget that You would have us be prepared for what You have in store for us. God help us to do that very thing by waking up and remembering You. God, You have given us each and every day as a gift. Help us to live them in such a way. It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

Congregational Prayer

We come before You today, O God, in a spirit of hope and expectation. We praise You for Your power, majesty, and authority, and thank You for the gift of coming into Your presence in worship. Through these weeks of Advent, we pray that we might be more aware of You, that we might live in expectation of all You will do for, through, and within us. We remember today the many needs of our world, our nation, and our community. Show us how we might make real Your presence in the world through our actions and attitudes.

We come to You now with the prayers of this congregation as we pray for **(Give List)**. We also pause to pray for all the joys and concerns that we have carried with us here this morning. Lord, help us to offer up all of these concerns in such a way that we are looking to You and all of the ways that You are with us and will be with us. Lord, hear our prayers. **(Long Pause)**

God it can be so easy to just go through the motions. Help us to wake up and truly understand that this is the day that You have made. Lord, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Through Jesus Christ, the Coming One, we pray. Amen.