



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

First Sunday of Advent (A) – Romans 13:11-14

Focus: *Wake Up!*

word of life

“Besides 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; the night is far gone, the day is near.” (Romans 13:11-12b NRSV)

Read Romans 13:11-14

Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, “You know what time it is...” (Romans 13:11 NRSV) But Paul does not use the Greek word *chronos*, a word commonly used to reference a chronological time period such as measured by a calendar or clock. Instead, he uses the Greek word *kairos*, a word meaning the “right” time. In the New Testament *kairos* is used to refer to God’s appointed time. So, to know the time (*kairos*) is to acknowledge God’s intervening activity through Jesus Christ in our chronology.

Awake! Awake to God’s time frame. Wake up and acknowledge God’s time zone—one not measured by minutes, hours, days, months, and years.

1. *What is meant when Paul writes, “You know what time it is...”?*
2. *How does God’s time (kairos) compare to human-measured chronological time (chronos)?*
3. *Is it helpful to think of time in these two ways? Explain your answer.*

There is a sense of urgency as people are called to discard complacency and apathy. Salvation is nearer to us than ever before! These words are not intended to evoke fear and trembling, but instead be reassuring to believers of Christ Jesus. Do not be anxious! Do not obsess about the end of time when Christ will return. Instead, wake up. Something wonderful is about to occur.

4. *What does it mean to spiritually wake up?*
5. *How might the nearness of salvation be reassuring?*

In this wake-up call in Romans 13, Paul uses the imagery of light and darkness associated with chronological time to call people into an ethical response to God’s *kairos* moment. “Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...” (Romans 13:12b NRSV) Works of darkness include reveling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarreling and jealousy.

6. *What else might be added to this list of works of darkness?*
7. *What would be on the list of works of light?*

For Paul, putting on the armor of light is to put on Jesus Christ. “Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” (Romans 13:14 NRSV) Rather than wearing the clothing of warfare with all its armor, put on love as described in Romans 13. “Owe no one anything, except to love one another... Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:8, 10 NRSV)

It was a tradition in the early church to put a new garment on the newly baptized as a way to represent his or her new life in Christ. This reference to putting on Jesus might be baptismal vocabulary. Rather than wearing clothing for sleeping, put on a baptismal garment and prepare to serve Christ in daily life.

8. *What does it mean to put on Jesus Christ?*
9. *How urgent is it to put on Jesus Christ?*

Word among us

Pat couldn't sleep. Tomorrow was a big day, full of so many unknowns. Darkness lingered outside. Slowly, slowly the sun strolled through the back yard, casting shadows and drying the dew. There would be no turning back now that dawn was here. It was no longer yesterday, but today had begun. Onward.

1. *What is it like to wake up early and wait for the sun to rise?*
2. *Describe a day when you woke up early because of a special event. What feelings do you associate with that day?*

No matter our native land, gender, or age, we can all relate to the measurement of time by the rising of the sun. When the night passes into dawn, the sun casts long shadows as light peaks over the horizon. It is only a matter of time before the brightness of the day will be upon us.

As much as we might prefer to delay the beginning of a day, we cannot force the sun to retreat into the horizon. Once dawn comes, there is no returning to the darkness of night.

Paul uses this imagery of light and darkness to describe aspects of faith. Once we put on Christ, there is to be no more energy invested in the works of darkness. Our actions are to be done in the light of day open to public viewing. An older man told the story of dating his wife. Before each date, her father would come near the dating couple and sternly say, "Have a good time, but just make sure you have Jesus sitting in the backseat of your car."

3. *What was the father trying to tell his daughter and her date?*
4. *What might happen to us as we imagine Jesus as our companion in life?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

Wake up! It is easy to slumber through our lives, ignoring daily opportunities to love our neighbor. Love is our response to God's action in Jesus Christ. "Owe no one anything, except to love one another...Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:8, 10 NRSV) Yet love does not come easily or quickly. It is by the grace of God we become lovers.

Paul's imagery of putting on Jesus Christ and the armor of light can be helpful. Whether this is warfare or baptismal vocabulary, we get the point. Each day as we rise to put on our clothing for the day, we are reminded to intentionally put on Jesus. This is not just a daily occurrence, but repeated over and over throughout the day.

5. *How will you remind yourself to put on Jesus Christ each day this week?*
6. *What are the obstacles in your life which prevent you from putting on the armor of light?*
7. *How has this passage stirred you to wake up?*

Prayer

Gracious God, stir us from our sleep. Wake us with a passion to put on Christ each day of our lives. Amen

last word

Pray to put on Christ... throughout the day.

Daily Faith Practices

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2013 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/dailyfaithpractices