

Christians Are Keen Observers Of The Time.

Text: Rom 13:11-14

Suggested Hymns:
2, 18, 491, 1, 205

- 1) They Know That It Is High Time To Awake.
- 2) They Know That They Should Lay Aside
The Garments Of Darkness
- 3) They Know That They Should Put On
The Armour Of Light

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 13:11-14, ¹¹ *And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.* ¹² *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.* ¹³ *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.* ¹⁴ *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The beginning of a new church-year grabs our attention. Our thoughts are focused on serious matters. Time is fleeting. It is a most forcible reminder that we, too, are going forward. The shadows are lengthening. The evening of life is approaching. Some time, the last year of grace will begin. Will it be this year?

What a powerful impression this should make on us! As children of God we should give diligent heed to this changing of the years. We cannot permit the change of time to pass by unheeded. Our theme for today is *Christians Are Keen Observers of the Time*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Christians Are Keen Observers Of The Time They Know That It Is High Time To Awake.

Our text begins, *And do this, knowing the time*. For Christians of every generation, the present time is no time for spiritual sleep. In fact, the window of opportunity to lead a life of love and service to God and our neighbour becomes

smaller with each passing day. The hymn writer James Montgomery has it right when he says that the passing of each day brings us *“a day’s march nearer home.”*¹

When the first rays of the morning appear, the day is approaching. The apostle draws on this common experience for an illustration. *“Now it is high time to awake”* — the household arouses from sleep. Everywhere there is the evidence of life. Think of such the things on the farm or in the city. In fact, all the creatures of God observe the time.

The apostle argues that we Christians should watch the time closely; note that it is really *“high time.”* The wording in the original is very emphatic. *“Knowing the time, that it is the hour that we should already be roused out of sleep.”* The apostle does not speak of natural, but of spiritual sleep — drowsiness, indifference, inactivity, and the sleep of sin.

We read in Ephesians 5:14-16, ¹⁴ *Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.”* ¹⁵ *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* And in 1 Thessalonians 5:6 and 8, ⁶ *Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.* ⁸ *But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.*

How common is such spiritual sleep today! The Lutheran Church is also afflicted with such indifference. Often it is extremely hard to arouse members and congregations. Many people think, *“We have the pure doctrine. There’s nothing wrong with our Lutheran Church,”* and they turn over drowsily and are not concerned.

Other people are self-satisfied. They are very pleased with their own life and conduct. They lull themselves to sleep by supposing that all is well. They permit the hours to slip by and never heed the call to awake. *“To awake”* is the opposite of spiritual sleep.

First of all, *“To awake”* refers to conversion. Since *“we daily sin much,”* repentance is a matter of daily concern. The Christian makes it his daily business to awake from sinfulness. It is high time for this. The clock has struck the hour for it.

The reason given for it is that *now our salvation is nearer*. Salvation in this connection does not mean the acquisition of forgiveness and all the blessings which Christ has earned for us. They are our very own as soon as we come to faith.

Rather, it refers to our final salvation, realised fully when Jesus comes to receive us (at the final Judgment) or when we are called to come to Him (through Christian death). This is now *nearer than when we first believed*, either in point of time or in point of importance.

According to the latter view there is no longer anything between us and our final redemption. At the time of our conversion our thoughts were fixed primarily on our justification; now they are riveted upon our final redemption.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand is a further argument to convince the Christian that it is “*high time*” to awake. Both expressions emphasise the approach of the “*Day of the Lord*.” We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, ¹ *But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.* ² *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*

There are many other Scripture verses that refer to the Last Day, for example Romans 2:5-11, ⁵ *But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,* ⁶ *who “will render to each one according to his deeds”:* ⁷ *eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;*

⁸ *But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness -- indignation and wrath,* ⁹ *tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;* ¹⁰ *but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ¹¹ *For there is no partiality with God.*

And in Philippians 1:6, ⁶ *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 2:10-11 also refers to the Last Day, ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those*

under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And in 1 Corinthians 3:13,¹³ *each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.*

Our conduct must be as written in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6, ⁴ *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.* ⁵ *You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.* ⁶ *Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.*

Secondly, this Day is approaching rapidly. We are living in the dawn, the break of day. Look at some of the signs which Scripture gives us as rays of the approaching Day.

For example, Matthew 24 lists many signs which include, deceivers, false prophets, *wars and rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*

And finally a very positive point, *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

This should persuade us all that it is necessary for us *"To awake."*

2. Christians Are Keen Observers Of The Time

They Know That They Should Lay Aside The Garments Of Darkness

Along the same lines, the apostle observes that *"our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed."* The full realisation of our salvation, either at our death or at the second coming of Christ, is always imminent. It could be today!

Hence in view of the rapid passage of time, the message is clear: seize the opportunity to live a life of righteousness. The apostle states that in a

negative/positive combination: let us “*cast off the works of darkness*” and “*let us put on the armor of light.*”

There is a definite difference between the garments which we use during the night and those which we use during the day. We do not walk around in pyjamas during the day. We put them off when we awake from sleep. The apostle uses this thought and argues, *Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness.*

“*Darkness*” is to be understood as unrighteousness, ungodliness, wickedness, just as “*light*” stands for righteousness and godliness.² It will never do for a Christian, who has awakened from the sleep of sin, to walk about in the garments of ungodliness and wickedness.

Our text gives us an excellent opportunity to speak concretely. The apostle states, *not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.* These are the garments worn by the ungodly today.

No child of God can continue to be guilty of gluttony and drunkenness. These sins exclude from the Kingdom of God as we read in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10,⁹ *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Nor can a child of God continue in “*lewdness and lust,*” i.e., the sins against the Sixth Commandment: adultery, fornication, immorality. People committing those sins walk about in shameful works of darkness and have no part in the Kingdom.

Nor can a child of God continue in “*strife and envy.*” To delight in hatred and bitterness or to have a heart filled with jealousies and envy is unchristian. All these are garments of the night. A Christian must not be seen in them; he must “put them off,” “throw them off.” He dare not live in such sins secretly. God knows, and He condemns. A Christian must “*cast off*” these works. He must not fulfil the inordinate desires of the flesh.

3. Christians Are Keen Observers Of The Time They Know That They Should Put On The Armour Of Light.

When we wake up in the morning, we put on garments of the day, garments in which we may be seen, in which we carry out our work. This is the very opposite of the previous section.

The apostle makes this application, *walk properly, as in the day*. In garments of the day we are not ashamed to appear. Live so that you need not be ashamed. This applies not merely to life and conduct when under the observing eye of our fellow-men, but also under the observing eye of God. He always sees and sees everything everywhere. *Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.*³

Put on the armor of light. Armour is the fighting garment of a soldier. Christians do not walk about in garments of ease and leisure. They face a battle. It is warfare, forced on them by forces of evil, which want to drag them down into “*works of darkness*” again. This necessitates a fight. Hence such admonitions as, “*Fight the good fight,*”⁴ “*Endure hardship,*”⁵ “*Put on the whole armor,*”⁶ and in Revelation 3:11 to *Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*

“*Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.*” This does not refer to putting Him on by faith, whereby we appropriate His righteousness. It is rather a “putting on” of His example, following His perfect example, becoming more Christ-like in our life and conduct.

Of course, we never become perfect, but we are to be always putting on. A Christian never pauses in this. He is constantly improving. He is never a finished product here on earth, but is always “in the making,” and showing advancement.

Hence we do well to strive earnestly, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to heed the apostle’s double encouragement to put off the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light.

Let us do so, all the more as we see the Lord’s Day approaching. After all, “*the night is nearly over; the day is almost here.*”

May we always watch carefully the time in which we live and make diligent and conscientious use of such days as these! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hymn 497

² cf. 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:13

³ Philippians 1:27

⁴ 1 Timothy 6:12

⁵ 2 Timothy 2:3

⁶ Ephesians 6:11