

## **“You better wake up!” Romans 13:11-14**

**Besides this you 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. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

Today is the first Sunday in Advent, when we remember the first coming of Jesus, and, also, focus on His second coming at the end of this age. The Church has been doing it for already almost 2000 years.

You know, that's a long time. Long time for those who are waiting for their Lord and Saviour to come in His glory, with all His heavenly hosts, in His divine majesty and to bring forth new heavens and new earth, our eternal home.

But, then, think how much times passed away since the Son of God gave this promise to Adam and Eve, that He will provide the solution against sin and death, and till He finally fulfilled this promise two thousand years ago.

When Eve had their first child, Cain, she thought right away that this is the one, whom God had promised. He wasn't. Instead he murdered his brother. We don't know how much time passed since those days till the days of Abraham.

But from the time when Abraham received God's promise that through his descendent all the nations of the world will be blessed, till the time of Jesus, these were two thousand years again.

God does things in His time. And He is not in hurry. He is in control of everything. He knows where He wants to get, and He will get there when the time is right.

If we can know one thing about this God, that is this, – He keeps His promises. He is faithful and Almighty, and once He has given His Word, we can be fully assured, He will keep it. He will come at the end of this age, and He will have you with Him.

Today we heard these words from Paul's letter to Christians in Rome, regarding how we are to live as we wait for our Lord and God to return. You won't believe how similar our cultures have become.

If we take away good things that the Church has brought into Western society, we are pretty much were Romans were. Habits and values of the society around us are not much different than they used to be 2000 years ago.

Let's see what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through His servant Paul the apostle. **You know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.** Here Paul uses a very helpful image. Waking up from sleep. He speaks to Christians. Wake up from sleep! Wake up!

What does he mean? What are people like when they are asleep? They don't know what is going on around them. They are in this world, but have no idea what is happening.

This is what this world, and people in this world are like. They are like those fallen asleep. Without understanding of what is going around, without wisdom. And, yes, Paul says it to us, Christians. Don't be like this world!

The Word of God, the wisdom of God, the light of the Son of God helps us to see things as they are, we have this wonderful privilege. So, wake up! See the reality as it is.

Know your God as He is. Understand what is wrong with this wonderful, but broken world around us. Know where to look for healing and help, know Jesus, God who speaks to you and comes here to be with you and to bless you.

Wake up! Stop living in dreams or nightmares! For there is a very important reason. **For your salvation is nearer to you now than when you first believed.** Again, this is so true.

And it doesn't matter, whether we think about the second coming of Jesus at the end of this age, or we think about the end of our lives. Either way the time when we'll see our Lord and God face-to-face is much closer. And it comes closer with every day.

**The night is far gone; the day is at hand.** Here Paul uses one more very helpful image. That of night and day. What does he mean by it?

The Bible uses the imagery of night and darkness speaking about this age. Whatever enlightened people may consider themselves to be, from God's perspective this age, the world we live in is night and darkness.

It is during the night when people are asleep, and don't understand what is going on. It is during the night when everything is dark as we can't see things as they are. It is in darkness when the most shameful things are done.

Day and light, on the other hand, is God's Kingdom. It is the age that is coming. It is here already. But it is not fully seen yet. This image with the night far gone and the day at hand is very helpful.

You all probably have seen a dawn. When it is still dark, but you already can see that it is getting lighter where the Sun is going to rise. It is still night, but you know that it is inevitable that day will be here shortly.

The day is God's Kingdom. It is this coming age where everything will be restored in its goodness and purity. We can see and experience glimpses of it already now. In the Church. Among brothers and sisters in Christ around you. In sinners like you and me, when transformed by the Holy Spirit, we begin to shine the light of Jesus in our lives here.

You can see it when we kneel before our Lord and hand over to Him our sins, asking His to create in us new hearts. We can see it when we fight against our pride and arrogance and humbly ask others to forgive us.

We can see it, when people, who may be strangers to you, offer their help and prayers only because you and they are children of the same Father in heaven. We can see it when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

The night is far gone, and the day is at hand. Therefore, **let us cast off the works of darkness. Let us not walk in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. And make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**

This is very practical. When Paul calls us to wake up, he also shows what the works for darkness are. Stop walking in drunkenness and sexual immorality, in quarreling and jealousy, and don't gratify the desires of the flesh.

It is interesting how Paul arranges his exhortations. He begins with orgies and drunkenness, then continues with sexual immorality, then with quarreling and jealousy and ends with general advice not to gratify the desires of the flesh.

There is a logic in his arrangement. Orgies and drunkenness, which initially can begin quite innocently, often provide the best soil for sensuality and sexual immorality.

People begin with focusing too much on how to fill their boring and empty lives, then it gradually escalates and leads to the next step, sensuality and sexual immorality.

Which then inevitably leads to many broken relationships and broken hearts, to jealousy, anger, rivalries and envy. It leads into darkness, into night where you struggle to see light, where is no more peace, or joy or hope.

Therefore, Paul says, if you are a child of God, don't gratify these desires of the flesh. But aren't these things so well established in our society, even celebrated? How much are we guilty of many of them? I know that I am.

To those who indulge those desires of the flesh, Paul issues this warning. "I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5:21) Did you hear? Those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God!

This is very serious. Paul is not saying that those who have ever done any of these won't inherit God's Kingdom. He says that those who keep doing these things, those who don't want to repent and to turn away from the ways of darkness, but want to persist in them, even after they are called by Jesus, those will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

This warning is like a cold shower. Wake up! We are not immune to the influences of our society. Our church is not immune to these influences, nor are media of our church.

Sometimes we may excuse works of darkness when we misunderstand what true love is. You can't love anyone acting against the will of God, or supporting sin. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to love God and one another.

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” (1John 5:2-3)

And sometimes we excuse the works of darkness for we fear people more than God, and we want to please people more than we want to please our God. This is, why the Holy Spirit warns us to walk in light.

You know what is so good about being a Christian? That our dear Lord Himself sends His Spirit to help us to live blessed lives. He sends His Holy Spirit to change and renew our hearts so that we could live in freedom and joy, sincerely desiring to love our God and our neighbors.

Jesus never leaves us alone to fight against our sins, or against the darkness or this world. Paul wrote, “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, put on the armor of light, let us walk properly as in the daytime.”

We can't do things like these, unless our Lord Jesus helps us. And He, indeed, does. Already in your baptism, God the Father put on you the Lord Jesus. Jesus Himself gives you His Holy Spirit.

He gives you His Spirit through His Word. He unites you with Himself and clothes you with His Spirit like armor against the powers of darkness, when you partake in the Holy Communion. Have this image in mind when you come to the Lord's Supper!

This is, why we come together as God's people. That our God could wake us up, could bless you with His wisdom, could embrace you and put on you the armor of His Spirit. He loves doing it.

We live in times when the day of our Lord is closer than ever. We live in times when the night tries to suppress the coming light. But it can't. The day of our Lord is coming. Inevitably.

This time He will come in His glory, He will raise all the dead and He will take His beloved children, He will take you, to live with Him in new heavens and new earth. This is His promise to you.

Be assured of it. If Jesus died for you, and rose for you, He will also have you with Him to live in eternal joy and happiness and blessedness. Wake up, cast off the works of darkness, and walk as beloved children of God.

And the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your minds and hearts in Jesus Christ. Amen.