Romans 13:11-14 And do this since you understand the present time. It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12The night is almost over, and the day is drawing near. So let us put away the deeds of darkness and put on the weapons of light. 13Let us walk decently as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual sin and wild living, not in strife and jealousy. 14Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give any thought to satisfying the desires of your sinful flesh.

Yep, here it is another Advent season. Advent is a word that means “coming.” We call this season of the Christian year, “coming” because it is a time for us to reflect all the more on Jesus and that fact of his coming. We think of Jesus in connection with his coming birth. That we celebrate the birth of Jesus at this time of year. Celebrate the fulfillment of God’s promises for a Savior from sin and the wonder and marvel of that baby, laid in a manger with shepherd’s staring at him and praising his name. Advent is also a season where we turn our attention to that other coming of Jesus. We spend time thinking about Jesus coming the second time and how that coming will be so different from the first.

The second coming of Jesus is that time when the Judgment Day will occur. The trumpet will sound and everything around us will melt away. And as we look, there will be Jesus, coming in the clouds with great glory and honor, with the angels and all the powers of heaven with him. Also with him all those who proceeded us in death. And so it will be as Thessalonians proclaims, we **“will be caught up in the clouds together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.”** It is because of these words and these promises of God that I have no fear and no worries about when Jesus will come. It will be a great day. A wonderful day of awesomeness forever thereafter.

As has been my habit, we will work at considering both aspects of Advent, so that we are sure not to miss a thing. We don’t want to miss a single bit of the excitement of Jesus, Son of God born into this world to be our Savior and we don’t want to miss a single bit of the wonder of Jesus and His eternity to come. Our theme for today will be: **CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH CHRIST.**

Now it is really quite evident that this text is highlighting for us the fact and reality of Jesus coming again the second time. Let’s take a step by step look at the words. The first thought of the words is found in verses 11-12a. They say this: **“And do this since you understand the present time. It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12The night is almost over, and the day is drawing near.”**

No, I don’t think the Apostle Paul was some sort of “dooms day” guy. I can tell you right now, if we follow all that is revealed of the life and times of Paul, this man has had more revealed to him than most of the original disciples of Jesus. Paul did not think that “Judgment Day” was right around the corner and now two thousand years later we have to say he got it wrong. If you pay attention to his words, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, his words are right and true. The first thing you need to do is grasp the first words, **“Do this since you understand the present time.”** All this man is saying is that now, because of the revelation of God’s Word and the coming of Jesus the first time we understand the way things are. We understand that each of us has a time of grace, the time of our lives when we have that need to learn of Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. What Jesus has done is won the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. What Jesus has done is revealed the wonder and joy of salvation by the gift of faith!

We are in the time of grace, our time of grace, each of us. I don’t know when any of us will die, but what I can tell you is that today you are indeed closer to that end than you were yesterday. Since you do not know when you will be called from this world to the throne of God’s Judgment, now, now is the time and day for you to hear and believe the message of Jesus. Truth of the matter is, that from the moment you were born, you were headed and you were on that path of standing before the Lord. If you look at what is said, you will realize that what I have just told you is the factual message of these words. It is time for you to wake up, to be prepared for that day of salvation. Don’t wait for tomorrow or the next day. You don’t even know if those days are coming for you. Fact is, and it is true for all of us: **“The night is almost over, and the day is drawing near.”** That day is your day of reckoning, your day when you will stand before the Lord and Judge of all. On that day you will either hear, “Come in, come in my child to your eternal home,” or “You are mistaken. I never knew you. Away from me you evil doer.”

Of course, with so much at stake, we then want to ask the question: How, how do I prepare, how can I be ready for this day, this day of reckoning and judgment?” The answer is given here. It is a two-fold answer. The first part is found in verses 12b-13. **“So let us put away the deeds of darkness and put on the weapons of light. 13Let us walk decently as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual sin and wild living, not in strife and jealousy.”**

I don’t know, I hear those words and I think what they say is about as plain and evident as the Lord can make it. And yet so many, so many of this world, so many even in various churches and religions pay absolutely no heed, show no concern for what these words say. It is as if the world has decided that we can do what we want and God, if there is one, will just have to take us as we are! NOT GOING TO HAPPEN! Look at what is said.

**“So,”** that word tells us that because of all that has been written of before applies here. It is the message of Jesus as Lord and Savior, Jesus as the One who rules and has authority over all. Jesus and His Word is the final say. **“Let us put away the deeds of darkness.”** Is this what confuses us? We don’t get what this means. If you understand that in Scripture “light” is of God and “dark” is of Satan, I think what this means is pretty evident. Don’t act, don’t behave like the dead in Christ. Don’t carry on like the world and with the world which is under Satan’s power and influence. **“Put away the deeds of darkness.”** And just to make sure you get this right, those deeds of darkness are explained here.

**“Let us walk decently, as in the daytime.”** The word “decently” is an adverb. It means, with propriety, properly, to behave as is becoming, in this case, as is becoming a child of daytime. The passage goes on. **“Not in sexual sin and wild living, not in strife and jealousy.”** People, I don’t think I have to explain these words. We know what they speak of and still so many of this world act as if these words just don’t apply to me and what I do! I am in love therefore, my sin is okay. I what to spread joy, therefore, my wild living is helping people. And that strife and jealousy??? Hey, I am only human. The Lord has got to lighten up!

Yes, that was meant as a pun. It is not the Lord that needs to lighten up, He is the light and Daytime. It is you and I who need his light, his wisdom and guidance to grasp that we have no right to a life of sin and evil. And we have no right to change what is sin and evil. Trust me, if God says it is wrong, then it is wrong! You are not going to talk your way out of eternal hell! “Well, golly Jesus, I didn’t know you really meant it!” Do you see why we are given the call: **“It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep…put away the deeds of darkness.”**

Do you remember that I said there were two answers to the question, “How do I prepare?” Here is the other answer: **“Put on the weapons of light…clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give any thought to satisfying the desires of your sinful flesh.”**

There is only one way to speak of this. That’s right, it is to speak of Jesus. You remember Jesus? In a few weeks we are going to celebrate his first Advent. Jesus, son of God, miraculously entered into the womb of Mary to be born into this world. It all happened just as God has revealed in his Word. Jesus, born of a Virgin, born under the law for just one purpose, to redeem those under the law. Jesus came to be our Savior. Maybe you need to contemplate what he really did for you.

What He did first was to humble himself, live in this world of ours and face every temptation there is and yet remain holy and pure. Jesus did that for about 30 years. Quietly waged a battle against sin and the devil for just one purpose. To be the atoning sacrifice for our sins, indeed, the sins of the entire world.

Because when the time was right, Jesus went to the cross for us. Not just a mere, horrid physical death, but on the cross Jesus took on the wrath and anger of God the Father for all the sins of all the world. Think about it. Jesus suffered hell for each and every sin of ours, for all of us. I can barely comprehend that. What I do is try and imagine a way to grasp this truth. Would it help you to think of Jesus on a great big barbeque spit? Slowly spinning over the fire, getting roasted through and through. And yes, feeling every lick and breath of flame and heat there is. Agony! He suffered agony for us. And what I just described is what happened for one of us! Now imagine that scene for each of us. All in this room, all in the town, the state, the nation, the entire world, in truth, the entirety of humans from beginning to end. That’s what Jesus has done for us.

And what is your response? “Real nice Jesus, now bug off!” You have the right and ability to say and act that way. It is called “unbelief.” You can even say, “Thank you Jesus,” and continue to live like a child of the darkness and that too is called “unbelief.” If you truly get what I told you Jesus has done for you, the only response of faith is: Lord, I believe, forgive my sins. Help me to live a life of honor and praise to you as a way of saying thanks and as a way of helping others grasp your wonder.” That is what it means to **“clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

I don’t know, I guess I think this is all way to simple. And it is. It is about Jesus. It is about him being the Savior of the world, your Savior, my Savior and on and on! God sent his Son to save us. God does not want us to end up in hell and damnation.

That is what the Christmas celebration is all about. I am still filled with awe as I, in my mind, look at the manger and there is this baby who is God’s Son and our Savior. I don’t get why Jesus would come. I don’t grasp how he could agree with his Father on this plan of Him enduring our sinful world, putting up with trial and temptation all so he can go to the cross for damnation! I could not do what God did. I had one child and I can tell you that if this town had come to me and said, “Terry, we want you to kill your child and then we can be happy and carefree.” I can tell you right now there is going to be one fierce battle as this simple father fights to save his child. I couldn’t do it. But the Lord our Father did. Gave his son up for us. And let the full truth sink in…gave his Son damnation on the cross, so that we could live!

That is what God and Jesus have done for us. Atoned for our sins. We are asked to believe this. We are asked to take that faith that God gives us and us it. Not use it to gain anything, because we already have everything, but rather to use it that others might hear of and know this awe of Jesus. Be the light of Jesus in this dark world. Be the light of wonder and glory to God. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is our Advent challenge. To put on Jesus. To be like Jesus. To imitate and proclaim his name to the world. Not just by our words, because words can be pretty cheap. But by our lives, our actions, our very deeds and attitude to carry forth Jesus to the world.

And yes, we will be lousy at it. I think of the child’s drawing stuck to the refrigerator. That child comes and gives you that drawing and you look and look and finally you say, “Wow, a dancing pony!” And the child say, “No, it’s a whale swimming!” But we delighted in that drawing, felt pride that our child shared that drawing and the excitement they had in making it. That is our lousy lives of glory to Jesus. And yet God delights in the fact that we are doing, working, trying. In total love he says, “Yes, what a beautiful whale it is!”

Clothe yourselves with Christ. The day is drawing near. Amen.