

Designed For Love

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 December 2021

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, sometimes it's really easy to follow Jesus. Sometimes, Father Jesus, following him means we do things that people think are good and wise and true.

And sometimes we have to do things and change in ways that many people in our society think are odd or weird, maybe even wrong. And Father, you know the different things in our hearts, and you know how much we like approval of others.

And we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would bring the truth of who Jesus is and what he did for us on the cross, bring that home deeply to us. And we ask that you would bring your word home to us as well, that we would hear every word of your scripture as good news for us.

Not only good for us on this side of the grave, but good into eternity. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So, I have sort of a nerdy aspect to me that many of you are aware of. And I have a bit of a nerdy conscience that sometimes gets me into trouble.

[1 : 17] It might get me into trouble today. And so, the way I'm mentioning this is this. When I was in the Anglican Church of Canada, for many, many, many years, it would come time for Advent.

And so, especially when I was first being trained, I was told we had to do an Advent sermon, right? Because it was Advent. And then I would be told that Advent is about, you know, there's the four candles.

And I think, was it one of them, like, love, peace, joy, and hope? Do I have that? I'd probably have the order all wrong. But that's what I was told. That's what Advent is. And then I'd have to get up and do the sermon.

But here's part of my nerdy aspect. I'd look at the scripture text for the day. And the scripture text had nothing to do with those themes. Like, I mean, maybe if you really played around with it like you did, you know, and that's what, you know, that's what I'd hear people other do.

They'd play around with it. You know, maybe there was this, you know, I sometimes felt like if you took, you know, enough letters from different words, you could make the word peace or something. And you could talk about that. So, like, I, you know, I sort of think that my sermon should be based on the Bible text, not like I just do some things and add a couple of Bible verses.

[2 : 25] So, and then it got even more complicated because as I started to become aware of the whole prayer book and the Inglis Reformation, I started to realize that actually how people talked about Advent isn't sort of how ancient Christians talked about Advent and how Anglicanism talked about Advent up until like just a few decades ago.

So, anyway, I wrote a very nerdy blog that came out on Monday. And for those two or three people who read my blogs, if I don't get them done by 4.30 now, then they come out on Monday. If I get it done before 4.30 on Friday, then it comes out on Saturday.

So, my blog didn't get done at 4.30 on Friday. You'll get it tomorrow. But one of the things I discovered is that like Advent goes right back to at least the fifth century.

In fact, I was talking to a guy who was like a patristic scholar just a week or two ago. So, and he told me that like for those guys like in the fifth century, Gregory the Great, and I can't pronounce the name of the other pope, what they just did is codified stuff that had been going on a lot longer, right?

So, if it begins in the fifth century, it might have gone like a century or more even earlier. And what happened is that these fundamental scripture texts, Advent, this way of beginning the church year, they didn't quite think of it in those terms back then, but preparing you to celebrate Christmas and all of that.

[3 : 46] They had these sort of eight foundational texts, a gospel text and epistle, which would be read the first Sunday of Advent, second, third, and fourth. And so, actually, if you go and find a 1662 book of common prayer, or you go online and type in 1662 book of common prayer, colics, if you look at the readings, this is what's so cool.

Like people who don't like, who want something thick and ancient, you're looking at the scripture texts that basically, up until they changed the lectionaries in the 1970s, you're looking at the texts they read for Advent, right back to the 400s.

Like, isn't that cool? Now, here's the problem, though. Those texts don't talk about faith, hope, peace, and joy. And so, what happens is that the Reformation comes in the mid-1500s, and Cramner, sort of this brilliant mind who ended up becoming a martyr, he looks at these readings, and he ends up making two completely new, three basically new prayers, and then a fourth one was added.

That's too nerdy. Sorry, I'm losing you. But here's the thing. The collect that we have for all of Advent really gives you the ancient Christian, as reflected through the Reformation, when we wanted to return to the Bible and the Gospel, it gives you what Advent is.

Now, listen, you know, faith, hope, peace, and joy, those are great. The Bible doesn't tell you how to celebrate Advent, so, like, there's not, this isn't like a Gospel issue or anything like that. So, all this is to say, so, Daniel and I are talking, like, months ago about what our scripture texts were going to be, and Daniel said, well, you know, we always do some specialized services around Advent and Christmas.

[5 : 22] Why don't we make December 12th the Advent Sunday, and then, which is what I'm doing, and then 19th and 24th and 25th we'll have Christmas sermons on the key Christmas texts, and then we'll do some other stuff December 26th, January 2nd, before we get back to Mark in January.

So, what we're looking at today is we're looking at, in a sense, the text, which is the, that helps to form the ancient Christian, as reflected through the Reformation, way of understanding what Advent is all about.

And what you see from that is it's about the three comings of Christ. It's about remembering, of course, the birth of Jesus humbly, the first coming, and it's also remembering the second coming, where he's going to come in glory to judge the living and the dead, and it is urging us to consider the third coming, which is when he comes into your life to be your Savior and your Lord.

Now, this is all good, but one of the things is, is I discovered this week, and it's been bothering my nerdy conscience all week, is I could go through this text in such a way that the average Canadian would think, yeah, that sounds like a really good idea, I agree with that, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but not realizing that the Bible text actually goes against what most Canadians believe.

And that doesn't feel very Canadian Advent-y, you know, and so I've struggled with it all week, but we're going to look at it anyway. Okay, so what we're going to do first is we're going to just pray or read the Colic for All of Advent, and you're just going to get it in your mind, and then you're going to see as we go through the Scripture text, we'll pray it again at the end, how this Scripture text has had a huge formative influence in the Book of Romans on how to understand Advent from an ancient perspective, a thick perspective.

[7 : 14] So you have it on the screen, that would be great. Let's pray it, say it together. Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal through him who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit, now, so one God, now and forever. Amen.

So you can see, I mean, there's already that judgment thing, which we're going to talk just a tiny bit about because there's some other stuff to get at, but let's look at the Bible text, and as we start to look at the Bible text, you'll see how this text, which goes way back, Christians in the 5th century, chose this as one of the texts on the first Sunday of Advent to prepare people for the birth of Christ, to remember it, to launch yourself into the Christian year, and so here's this text.

Romans chapter 13, and we'll start at verse 8. Owe no one anything except to love each other. Just by the way, if you have your own Bible, it's really good to follow along.

We have it up there on the screen, and you online, you can see it down here. But, you know, if you're at home, get your own Bible. It's really good to have your own Bible and to be able to look around the text to see if I'm handling the text correctly and honestly and fairly.

I'll read it again. Owe no one anything except to love each other. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. And here the word law doesn't mean like the law of Rome or the law of Canada. [9 : 01] It means what we call the Old Testament and our Jewish friends call the Tanakh or the Torah. So it's saying all of the commands in the Bible. I'll read that verse 8 again.

Owe no one anything except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the commandments of the Bible, the law. For the commandments, verse 9, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandment are summed up in this word.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Now, that is a good text.

But if you think about it for a second, it has something in there which is a bit of a puzzle. It says, verse 8, Owe no one anything except to love each other.

It's saying that somehow or another, I owe it to you to love you. That I owe it to people, owe it to each other to love them.

[10 : 12] Now, if you think about it for a second, this is actually an idea that Canadians would find, like just common sense. Like if you were getting talking with, you know, the Tim Hortons coffee person, or, you know, Bridgehead, or Starbucks, or something like that, and you got chatting with them because you're friendly with them, and you just talked about how there was this interaction and how a person was rude to you, they would just automatically say, well, it's just common sense, of course.

Like everybody knows that it's, that's wrong, that they shouldn't have been rude to you. They should have acted in a more loving manner, that what they did was wrong. And that would just be, that's like common morality in Canada.

But if you think about it for a second, it's a very odd idea. Like, and it's not actually, it isn't in fact the case that it's obvious to most people in the world, either today or throughout history.

Like, in classic Hinduism, the caste that you're in, you deserve it. If you're at the very, very bottom of the caste hierarchy, well, you deserve that.

And if you're at the top of the caste hierarchy, you don't owe it to love a lower caste person. They would go, what? They're in this situation of abject poverty, impoverishment, and powerlessness because they deserve it, because of what's happened in their previous lives.

[11 : 33] That's just, that's common sense. I deserve what I have, they deserve what they have, and I have no obligation to love them. That would be common sense.

If you think about it within the Quran, the Quran is a book of conquest that Allah has basically commanded his followers and his people that the goal is that all of the world will be subject to Allah. And it wouldn't be an obvious thing from reading the Quran that there's an obligation to love. In fact, Muhammad had slaves.

He was a warrior, and Muhammad was the greatest of all the followers of Allah. He was Allah's prophet. It isn't obvious in that context that you're owed, that you're owed it, that people deserve to be loved.

They're owed it. And if you think about it, even, in fact, if you read, like, serious philosophers who take evolution seriously, it's not obvious that human beings are owed love because, you know, at the end of the day, from an evolutionary and a scientific perspective, there's nothing special about human beings.

[12 : 57] Like, there's nothing special about us. There's really, in a sense, I have no more of an obligation to love you than I do to love a bird or a budgie or an earthworm.

That, in a sense, you're all just sort of the same. We might claim certain things, and one of you might claim that I owe it to love you, but that's really not based on science or reason.

It's just something that you happen to say. In fact, actually, if you really think about it, I know this is a discredited idea, but the reason it's discredited is actually because of the influence of Christianity, not because of anything inherent to the problem of taking naturalistic evolution seriously.

A very, very good case would be that, in fact, I don't owe anything to the weak. The weak should die, and it's, in fact, better for the human race in the long run if strong people are able to exercise their strength, have the majority of the food and the money and the resources and people who are poor will die off and those of us who are stronger and will actually be making the human race in a stronger and better way.

And I know that's a discounted idea, but it's not discounted because there's anything inherently wrong with the idea within that worldview. It ends up ultimately because, you know what, we owe others the debt of love, and that idea comes from Christianity.

[14 : 20] In fact, if you could put up the first point, this is what Christianity teaches. Because the triune God is love, he designed human beings to be loved and to love.

Because the triune God is love, he designed human beings to be loved and to love. That's how he designed human beings.

If you go to an Anglican wedding ceremony, one of the things we say in the ceremony at sort of the opening remarks is that the institution of marriage is something that was instituted of God in the time of man and woman's innocency.

In other words, that God designed human beings that some human beings would enter into marriage. And that's not something that was created because of evil coming into the world. That was part of God's original good intention.

That that's just how God designed human beings. And this is the same thing here with this idea is that God designed human beings in a sense when when we say oh no one anything except to love each other, this is actually saying something that really you'd have to think that it's a bit of a tension within other religions and philosophies because there is something intuitive about that that does make sense.

[15 : 36] even though then maybe our mind will come and say no no no Allah has said something different or the Hindu scriptures have said something different or the demands of Marxism or the demands of cultural theory or critical theory demand something very very different than this but and so there's at least for some people there's a bit of a tension between these types of things but this is why in fact Christianity has this very very deep understanding of why it is in fact the case that I owe it to the coffee person to treat them in a loving way I owe it to the other drivers I owe it to those in government to treat them in a loving type of way now it's very curious that this this powerful idea is seen right here in the text at the same time and this is where my nerdy conscience issue came out because you see I just the text that I read it could be understood in such a way that the average Canadian would say yeah yeah I understand that because the average Canadian would say well you don't actually have to to be married to live together and as you know but if you're living together you can't cheat on your partner like that's wrong like that that would be a very common idea and you wouldn't have to do much to argue for that for most people it would just be viewed as inherently correct and even later on in the text when it talks about sexual immorality most Canadians from within their own perspective would understand themselves to be very moral people in the sexual matter and so I could read both of these things and I could go on but not realizing that actually the Bible is disagreeing with Canadians in a very powerful way and I've struggled in my conscience

I wouldn't say struggled the devil has told me that I shouldn't talk about this but I thank you for praying for me here's what these two it's right here the word adultery which is a good word to translate it in verse 9 you shall not commit adultery and later on in verse later on when we read it in verse 13 there's the word sexual immorality in the original language it's the same word and the word is part of the porneia word group but here's the problem what does the porneia word group say the porneia word group is basically saying that sexual knowing and sexual stimulation is a good gift from God but is reserved to be enjoyed in the life of a biological male married to a biological female and outside of that we are called to sexual abstinence in singleness so now that I've just broken the law of Bill C4

I'll say it again sexual knowing and stimulation is good actually it's not clear whether I've broken the law and not but the wording is very unclear but because the wording is unclear it might be that if I preach this sermon in a year you'll have to bail me out later in the week and I'm not saying that for laughs it's going to definitely go to the courts and it should concern Christians if you haven't looked at it or read it it should concern you the way it's worded is it can mean that as long as I don't do it in a therapeutic context for money that I'm fine but it's not clear that what I just have said is in fact breaking the law it's not clear and that was pointed out to the bill makers and they refused to clarify it so it's not clear I'm going to say it again what does the pornea word group mean it means this sexual knowing and stimulation is a good gift from God but it is reserved to be enjoyed in the life of a biblical in the life of a biological male married to a biological female or for those outside of that sexual abstinence and singleness now this is a heartbreaking text for many people and I know that there are people here who struggle with this teaching and I know it's very very funny because

nowadays when we talk about this it automatically people think of trans and our trans family members or friends or are a lesbian and gay family members or friends but in fact this bible doesn't pick on it the text the word group doesn't pick on anybody it's a word to all human beings it includes it's a challenge to men and women who watch heterosexual pornography or have affairs or it's a challenge to all human beings but it's very curious isn't it that it's in the same text that say that we're owed love that we have this thing here which many Canadians would say is very profoundly unloving this week

I was reading a story of a person who at 15 years of age came out as a lesbian and she lived openly as a lesbian and when she was in university amidst the heartbreak of her girlfriend dumping her she came across she started for a variety of reasons looking at a couple of bible texts and she started to get in this little bit of a journey as to whether this first century Jew had something for her life and she didn't know what to do with any of this and so interestingly enough the only people she knew who were out Christians were as a lesbian couple and so she talked to the lesbian couple about it and they said that she should pursue Jesus that the bible has things to say that are just wrong about other things but she should pursue Jesus so it was with the encouragement of this lesbian couple that she did pursue Jesus and she ended up becoming a Christian and so as I'm looking at this text all week it's been playing with my mind if a member of the lesbian or the gay community was to come here wondering if there's something for them and

Jesus or if a person struggling with or not struggling just very happily trans happily gay happily lesbian and if they were to come here if they were to see that I've now shut the door on them but you know that very very first thing is true the triune God is love and because the triune God is love he designed human beings to be loved and to love only that explains why it is that we sense that we are that that you are owed love only that statement explains it if you just think for a second it's not obvious actually in terms of the the real serious theology and philosophy of the world's religions and the and the and the religion of the West only this very very powerful truth that there is a God that does exist that the God who does exist is the triune God and it's because the triune

[23 : 12] God is triune three persons but one God that that it can be said that God is love because the father has always loved the son and the son has always loved the father and the son the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit the son and and it's because that has been true from all eternity that God designed human beings to be to be loved and to love the first thing is I'm going to say this a bit more in a moment is this text should never be taken by Christians in a political sense it's not part of the culture wars because you see this text is not about us versus them this text is about us because every single human being is sexually broken every single human being is sexually broken some of us more than others some of us are broken to such an extent that if one of the rest of us heard about it we would be actually quite shocked at the depth of our sexual brokenness so this is not an us versus them text this is a text about us finding a way forward to that place where we understand that we are loved

I meant to show it a couple of weeks ago when or a month or two ago now Louise and I were in Montreal for a couple of days and we stayed on the south side of the Mount Royal and there's this Mount Royal it's a very beautiful park and we decided to walk from where we were to the other side of the mountain to go to St.

Joseph's Oratory and it was just a beautiful time to go you know it was one of those times of the leaves on the ground that the ground was really covered with all these beautiful multicolored leaves but there's still enough on the trees that you had the beautiful leaves on the bottom and above you all around and it was a nice temperature it was really beautiful anyway we're wandering for a way we're not in any rush right we're just taking a couple of days off so we come to a map and it was a very very very very very good accurate look at the map and you think well that's a nice map but I don't know where I am like in other words it becomes useless and that's actually what goes on in our culture you see the power of what this text is going to try to point this to it's trying to understand it's trying to help us to understand where we need to go and where we are and part of it wants to understand that you are sexually broken and that if you and I just look within to try to figure out who we are and where we have to go it's hard to figure out the broken parts from the good parts because we look at ourselves within by our normal natural abilities and we are like looking at the beautiful map about

Mount Royal Park without knowing where we are to know whether we should be going here or here or there or there you see you think about it as well if because the triune God is love he designed

human beings to be loved and to love that word designed is really important and that begins to get at the great profound difference between the Christian faith and how most Canadians think about these things now is because we're stuck by that word designed and that we were designed by love to be loved and to love it means that we can't treat human beings as if we're just plastic as if it's just clay and you can just mold that clay in any type of way in fact actually if you hear of somebody treating another human being if you come across a dad or a mom treating their kid as if they're clay that can just be molded in any type of way that the parent wants what do we say that's not loving that's what we say if we see that a man is treating his wife as if she's just sort of plastic or treating her like she's a blank slate and he can just paint on her whatever he wants we say that's not loving and it's because we understand on one fundamental level that if love if we are designed by love to receive love and to give love that means we're not just plastic we're not just clay to be molded we're just not blank canvases there's something there that can love and and has to be loved and we can't be reduced and if we're designed it means that there's things that we can do that might seem right to us but are actually breaking us like if you had an iPhone 13 Pro and you happened to leave it down over there and one of the beautiful little kids picked it up and figured out that that would be a great way to hammer in a loose nail on one of the chairs you'd grab it from them and why because an iPhone 13 Pro isn't designed to hang hammer and attack and if the little smart ass kid said but it's perfect for it you'd say no it's not designed for it and consider a couple of other things

I'm not going to give you the answer to these things but I want to try to show those of you who are all of us who have trouble thinking about this and a lot of us Christians are embarrassed to even think about it or talk about it and if you're listening in and you're here as a seeker and now maybe you're not a seeker anymore you're here as a skeptic you came in sort of like this but now you're sitting like this just consider a couple of these questions because the fact of the matter is if you not only follow the trajectory of the fact that we're owed love but follow the trajectory of these other things which you just think are obvious you realize that you're actually on the Christian side of the conversation not against it but you don't realize it like think about it for a second every single person that you almost everybody you meet will care it doesn't matter how secular the person is or how spiritual the person is they care who their loved ones sleep with you meet a 25 year old and they start to tell you that their mom has divorced their dad and she's sleeping with this guy but he's a jerk he's going to hurt her they care who their mom sleeps with and moms and dads care who their kids sleep with but if you care who people sleep with why can't

[30:07] God like why can't God and if in fact the true and living God is the triune God who is love who designed us maybe he actually knows the right maybe he knows what's right or if your kid begins to get caught up in neo-Nazi racist literature or if your kid gets caught up in something which not just says that there's problems with COVID-19 vaccines but all vaccines and they really get identified with that and start to tell you other types of stuff and they start to hang around with people like that and they get their identity out of it you care about how their identity is being formed you care what their identity is based on but if you care about it why can't God if you find out that your best friend has this new boyfriend but he treats your best friend like she's just a play thing a toy a playground don't you sort of agree with the human that the Bible teaching that a human being is more like a temple than a playground that human beings are more like temples that there's something sacred and that human beings are just play things or play toys but you see once you think these things you're on the

Christian side of the conversation now you're in the world of the Bible you don't treat a person like a blank slate or like clay and in fact even if you think about it for a second talk to alcoholics talk to people who've struggled with drug addiction but not just that people have had to go into therapy for all sorts of other reasons what you can if you talk to an alcoholic those of us who've struggled with any type of addiction what they'll tell you is this that the thing that was the most natural desire inside of them and the most powerful desire inside of them was ruining their lives and they needed some type of therapy and help to get clarity to set aside the desires that were more powerful so they could start to have sanity and freedom and control but you see if you understand and think that now you're on the

Christian side of the conversation you're on the biblical side of the conversation could you put up the next point here's another thing I know I have to be my time in every human being you can see the truth that you are designed and the truth that the design is bent or broken in other words that you're not just designed but you're a little bit of a ruin and so am I by the way when I say this there's

three fingers pointing back at me you think about it if you go to a science fiction movie or anything like that or you watch some documentaries if you look at a documentary of like when a tsunami has gone through or if you look at a documentary or movie where there's been a huge war or earthquakes or you look at the tornado stuff like that we can all tell the difference between when there's been something like a tornado and there's just a pile of rubbish the winds have just picked things up helter skelter higgledy piggledy thrown them in a thing and it's just a big jumble you can all tell the difference between that without with very rarely making a stake and between something which has now been damaged and ruined there's a difference between what the forces of nature create which is just a jumble of chaos and what human beings design and now maybe due to the stress of the wind or over time if you're watching science fiction things or fantasy things are now like ruins starting to crumble you can see the design and you can see the design you can see that human beings aren't a jumble there's a very interesting book by

Eric Metaxas that came out just about a month ago called *Is Atheism Dead* and the title which I don't think is the world's greatest title but it's a play on words to the famous time magazine cover in 1966 that is *God is dead* and the interesting thing that he does time and time and time and time again throughout the book is he shows from science and from archaeology how things have developed since 1966 and the fact the matter is is that every week every week every month every year the evidence of design of human beings goes up like this and the possibility of randomness is going down like this when Darwin developed his theory of naturalistic evolution fundamentally they thought a cell was just sort of like a little bit of jello covered in a pouch like in a pouch now you study the life of a cell the more they study and understand about the cell the more it is unbelievably complex and designed the more they know about the universe the fact that our life wouldn't exist if the moon wasn't the exact size it was in the exact distance from us it goes on and on if we weren't in this obscure corner of the galaxy all these things and then in human beings and not just human beings at a scientific biological physical level and environmental level but also the way that we're social the way that the way that we're formed the way that the longings and the yearnings of our heart there's all this idea that we're designed but also that there's something broken about us which is why I said that every single human being is sexually broken every single one of us are ruined our sexuality is part ruin you see here's the wonderful thing about the gospel the bible doesn't just sort of leave us there to help us to encourage to understand that we are designed

I mean on one level if you're honest about the longings and yearnings of your heart the idea that love has designed you for to love and to be loved is both something which is incredibly that draws you but also is incredibly frightening because every one of us have been let down by love and life and some of you some of us have been terribly terribly terribly terribly broken and experienced hatred rather than love from people who really should have loved you and so to hear this is both something which is both very very there's a tug of longing but at this sometime a tug of fear the Bible provides this profoundly good news look at what it continues to say in verses 11 and following 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 upon us the arm of light see the way the book of

[37 : 55] Romans is written is actually there's a bit of an introduction for I think the first 15 verses then verse 16 and 17 it's almost as if they give a praise of what the whole book is going to be about then verses 18 to halfway through chapter 3 is just telling you the problem of us being not able to save ourselves that we're broken there's something bent about us there's something ruined about us and that what we do is ruined and ruinous and that we can't save ourselves and then from the last half of chapter 3 up to chapter 11 it is a glorious constant exposition of how God has done something in the person of his son to rescue and restore people who cannot rescue and restore themselves that it's all been done by Jesus that it's not just something happenstance that before you even thought of Jesus he thought of you before you started to think of going towards Jesus he was calling you that Holy Spirit was moving in your life to draw you to

Jesus and when he draws you to Jesus you put your faith and trust in him and that everything that had to be done to make you right with God was done by him that you receive what love and if you could put it up in love he came to save you in love he walks with you in love he will come to save you in the whole earth and bring into you to live and live there MARK isischen the ruins.

He lives among the ruins. He redeems the ruins. And one day, even the most ruined who have put their faith and trust in Jesus in the new heaven and the new earth, well, they, you, will be if we saw

you on this side of the grave we couldn't look at you for your glory.

We'd want to worship you because we're idolaters. Our eyes couldn't stand the brightness. When God, the Son of God, who made you and designed you to love and to be loved, redeems you in love and restores your ruins and not just restores, but amps it up to a whole other key and level that for the rest of eternity, you go farther up and farther in, into the glory of who he created you to be and the glorious creation that you were meant to live in, where for all eternity you will bask in the love of the triune God for you and you will respond with love to the triune God and not only to other human beings, but to all of creation, that all of creation will be seen to be in love, from love, for love, to be loved, in a love that will never end or ever come to a rest, and where every day is better than the day before, and it will be hard to imagine how the day to come will be even better than the day to be, but when we wake to that new day, that new day will be even better and greater than the day that was, and the day to be will be greater still, everlastingly.

This text is telling us that what we now live in is the night that Jesus will return, and it's when he returns that the day will finally have dawned.

[42 : 00] You could put up verse 13, actually verse 12 again, the night is far gone, the day is at hand, so then let us cast off the works of darkness and put upon on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in carousing, which is better than orgies and drunkenness, not in porneia and sensuality.

Sensuality means sexualizing all of life, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the flesh to gratify its desires.

If you could put up the final point as we close, gripped by the gospel, cast off your works of darkness, put on the armor of light, walk in the dying of the night to the glory of God and the good of people.

It's really funny to read nerdy commentators as they try to struggle with this idea of putting on the armor of light, but anybody who's watched a superhero movie, anybody who's read a fantasy or science fiction novel, we understand it intuitively.

when you take the sword out of the stone, the sword changes you. When Aragorn gets his sword, the sword makes him more Aragorn and makes him greater.

[43 : 11] When you get the suit and you put it on, you become the suit. That's what the text is telling you. It's very simple. And for those of you with great imaginations, worry is a terrible misuse of your imagination.

I'm preaching to myself. Like imagine, as you wake up every day, today I'm going to take off those things of darkness. I'm going to take off despair. I'm going to take off resentment.

I'm going to take off bitterness. I'm going to take off greed. I'm going to take off lack of generosity.

I'm going to take that off and I'm putting on the armor of light. I'm putting on Christ. How am I going to deal with my temptations?

I'm going to cast away those things. I'm going to put on the armor of light. And gripped by the gospel, day by day, I'm going to cast off the works of darkness.

I'm going to put on the armor of light. And I'm going to walk in the dying of the night because that's the time we're living in to the glory of God and the good of people. I'd like you all to stand.

[44 : 22] If you could put up the collect again in closing, that would be wonderful. In light of this wonderful text, let's pray together the collect for all of Advent. Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armor of light.

now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen. Father, help us to put on the armor of light. And Father, if there are any here who have not yet given their lives to Jesus, Father, I ask that you just help them to surrender, to give their lives to Christ.

We know you, Father, that you will receive them as they turn to you, as they turn to Jesus. Father, pour out the Holy Spirit upon us as we remember your Son's death and resurrection, as we pray, as we continue to receive grace from you together.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.