Putting on Christ

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[0:00] Come, Lord God, and be present among us. Come, Lord God, and be present in my words, but also, Lord, in the way that they're heard. We pray, Lord God, that only the truth would be spoken and only the truth would be heard.

In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen. We're going to be looking at the passage that was just read, Romans 13, 8 to 14. If you don't have a Bible, you can come grab one up front here.
I'm going to be putting some of the readings up on there, but it's good to have it with you. We're also going to be turning to Deuteronomy just for a second. We're going to talk about what does it mean. We've heard it in our prayers. We've heard it in the reading. What does it mean to put on Christ? What does that mean? But not only what does it mean to put on Christ, what does it mean to put on Christ and love our neighbor?
Because those two things are linked, and they happen within that order. So that's what I want to talk about this morning. Our passage from Romans 13, if you're turning there, is a very important reading.
[0:56] In the history of Christianity. Both R.C. Sproul and John MacArthur say that basically the Christian spiritual life is summarized within this passage.

Some of you know St. Augustine. You've probably heard the name before St. Augustine. He was a Christian thinker and a Christian pastor, theologian, whose writings influenced the very development of Western Christianity.
In fact, not only Western Christianity, St. Augustine's writings helped develop what we know as Western philosophy as well. He was a teacher, originally, of rhetoric, which is basically arguing, in Milan.
And his philosophy had led him to ask, you know, what's next in life? What is life all about? And he really wanted to start his life over.
He wanted to start again, but he didn't know how to do that. And for Augustine at this time, not saint yet, obviously, or even a bishop, he was under a lot of anxiety because of this, to the point of tears.
[2:00] And so St. Augustine found himself in Milan in a garden of one of his friends. And while he was there in tears, he famously heard a child's voice sing, Tolelege, Tolelege, which translated means take up and read.

And the scroll that just happened to be there was Romans. And he picked up Romans 13 and turned to Romans 13, just happened to turn there, and he read verses 13 and 14.
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.
And he said he didn't need to read anything else in the Bible at that point. All of a sudden, light came down and filled his soul, he said. And all the darkness of his doubt vanished and washed away.
And from that moment on, Augustine took on Jesus, and the rest was history. And he led to help develop Christianity as we know it in Christian thinking in the Western world.
[3:13] So it's a very powerful passage to unpack, Romans 13. And we start with verse 8 as we start, as we're unpacking it, where Paul writes, Owe no one anything except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Now, some have tried to say that this passage bans lending or going into debt. But we know that's not true because elsewhere in the scriptures, lending and debt and how that is done is not only allowed, it's regulated.

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So for the moralists who are trying to do that, they wrote essays and essays on this. They basically were just wrong. The fact what Paul's talking about here is he's talking about not allowing ourselves to go into any kind of perpetual debt.
And not only that, apparently, non-payment or not getting paid for the work that you did was a problem in the Roman world. This is something that happened.
People just weaseled out, found some legal way. It was a very legal society. Found some legal way to weasel out of whatever contract they were in. And this is something that we very much share in our culture with theirs.
[4:24] My family were residential builders. And I happen to know that it is a very common thing for someone just before a job is done to decide, I don't quite like how that job was done.

And then proceed to not pay. And maybe have someone else finish the job and still live in the house even though they didn't like the work that was done. This happened quite often in cottage country where I was from. When people with lots of money or lawyers would come up, they would just refuse to pay the people who had done the work that they had.
They just basically found a way to weasel out of being paid. I think we can all find examples of how this happens where people take money and don't return basically what they're owed for it.
It happens within public service. I know that. We see it quite often, in fact. People use, will, some people will use any or all excuse not to pay their debts.
Any legal angle they can do to weasel out of it oftentimes. And what Paul is saying is that is not the Christian way. It is a basic question of integrity.
[5:34] Christians fulfill their debts. But he's not saying this in a moralistic sense. He's saying this in a broader sense where throughout these verses, in Romans 13, Paul is talking about the practical application of the golden rule, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

And he's awakening us to the reality that love is an obligation. In the Roman world, they felt that love was some sort of sentiment. It was some sort of feeling.
Does that sound familiar to anybody? In our culture, we very much see that love is some sort of sentiment, some sort of feeling that I have. What Paul is saying is that godly love is different.
The love of the kingdom is different. It's a choice that we make. A moment-to-moment choice that everybody in this room makes. And the one debt, when we put on Christ, that never runs out.
That one debt that never runs out is our debt to love one another. Living morally is a response to God's love and action. For Paul, God's love is always...
[6:44] The love of God is always God's love toward us. And then everything we do is in response to that. Our love is a response to that.

And what he does is Paul... He makes that point in a very interesting way in Romans 13. He actually points to the Ten Commandments. And we have this thing which we call the two tables of the law with the Ten Commandments.
And if you have your Bible, you might want to turn to Deuteronomy 5. Make sure I keep my finger in Romans 13. Where we have the first... If you just look from verse 7 on... At the first four commandments...
Have no other God before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. And even to observe the Sabbath day and to be with the Lord.
They all have to do with our relationship with God. And traditionally in the Protestant world, we've called this the first table of the law. Now, we start there and then we move on to the second table of the law.
[7:42] And if you look at all the other laws... Not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing... They have to do with our relationship with each other. So even going back to the Ten Commandments...

Love God and love your neighbor. If we're going to be people of godly love... We take on the love of Jesus. And that leads us to love one another. It's not just this moralistic...
Paul isn't just saying, be good. He's saying to love God. And that's going to lead us to be good. The message of second Advent to me as I read this passage...
And as we see the prayers that we've just read... Is to first love God... And then love one another.
And you can see that in verse 9. He literally quotes some of the commandments.
For the commandments, 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. This word. You

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shall love your neighbor as yourself.
[8:41] The message of second Advent is to seek to be formed... Into the people of godly love... By putting on Christ. By first putting on Christ. And this matters... For the reasons that Paul addresses...

Within the very text that we're looking at here. If you turn to verse... If we look at verses 11 and 12... Besides this, you know the time... That the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is near 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. Paul is addressing another issue...
That we share with the Romans. And that is spiritual drowsiness. He's saying, wake up. You see all manner of... Translations for that word.
Have vigilance. Make sure you're watching out. Watchfulness is a spiritual term that we use for that. Be vigilant. In a lot of ways... Rome had fallen into a state of spiritual sleep.
[9:44] In a lot of ways... When we look through Romans... They were becoming spiritually ineffective. And Paul here is pointing them... To a heavenly orientation.

Rather than a worldly orientation. And throughout Romans we see this. He puts this contrast between darkness and light. And wants Romans to focus on the light. This term, I think...
The term orientation... Which comes up a lot in a lot of the commentaries... I think is a very good term to use here. The term that we use for orientation...
Actually comes from the church. It comes from the direction... That we build a church in... Towards the east. Towards the orient. Especially in the more Catholic churches.
The Anglican churches. They built there so the altar... Was built towards Jerusalem. So the question here... When we talk about our orientation... Where is the altar...
[10:41] Of our lives... Oriented towards? And has that... Maybe that orientation drifted off... As we drift off to some sort of spiritual sleep...

Like it had for the Romans. It's so easy to go on autopilot. I work as a public servant. I get it. We commute. We work.
We commute. We're home. We rinse. We rinse. We repeat. And I find myself falling into that. And slowly but surely... If we just kind of get into this...
Worldly rhythm... And we're not really focused on... What it is that we're doing... Or what it is that we're about... We can start to orientate ourselves... Towards the world. The shiny things around us...
Take more and more of our attention. That was happening to the Romans. They were becoming very comfortable. We slowly move into thinking like a secular person. We become oriented... By worldly politics.
[11:38] By worldly stuff. By worldly philosophies. Now if there's anybody here... Who isn't a believer in Christ... You might be finding in 2018...

Worldly politics... Worldly philosophy... Is a very confusing thing. But we as Christians... Have that one... What we call that one... Central integrating principle.
We have Christ. And our orientation to Christ... Helps us put all these things... Into order. So if you're here this morning... And you just... The questions about life...
Are just flooding you... And you're questioning... Because the stuff's going on in politics... I would just really encourage you... To consider Jesus. To read through the Gospels... And see how he oriented a world...
That was just as mixed up as ours. And that perhaps... That's a person that you might want to follow. For those of us who love Jesus... We are oriented towards eternity.
[12:37] Paul says our salvation is nearer now... Than it was before. We want to have a salvation orientation... An orientation towards what... What's really going to matter. You might want to prepare for eternity...

You're going to be there for a long time. The love of God compels us... To be constantly awake... To be a people of godly love... Means being...
That we're oriented towards God. And so this gives us a to-do. Something we need to do this week. Something we need to do... I think throughout Advent. Paul doesn't just tell us...
What not... What to avoid. He actually tells us... Something to do. We look at verses 13 and 14 in the text. Let us walk properly... As in the daytime. Not in orgies and drunkenness...

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Or sexual immorality... Sensuality. Not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ... And make no provision... For the flesh... To gratify its desires.
[13:31] These central passages... As they were for Augustine... Give us direction. We are concerned with two things. Taking off...

And putting on. Two things. Taking off and putting on. First... We take off. We prepare the ground. While we do this... We're preparing the ground...
For grace and holiness to take root. By casting off... He means we're casting off... All those things... That have no place in eternity. And he's saying... You know...
Cast those things off... Like dirty laundry. Some of you know... I was deployed... Some of you here... I think everybody's old enough... To remember the earthquake... In 2010... In Haiti.
We were there... And landed on the ground... The night... The morning before... While it was still dark. And for those... Especially for the first... Couple of weeks... When we came back to camp... From the things we got to about...
[14:27] There was all manner of stuff... I don't even want to think... About what was on my uniform... When I got back. And you could not wait... To just get that thing off...

And chuck it into the laundry bag... Although... Actually there wasn't a laundry bag... For the first one... We just put the stuff back on... The next day... And went out and did it... But you couldn't wait... To get out... Of those dirty clothes... And that's what Paul's talking about...
He's talking about... Casting these things off... Like clothes... That we just... Can't wait to get rid of... All that... Of those things... That he's talking about there... And with equal enthusiasm...
We're called to clothe ourselves... With the things that belong... To the realm of glory... Put on... To claim the garments of light... That Jesus gave us at our baptism... Preparing the ground for sobriety...
For purity... For self-control... For principle-based godliness... And for the love of our neighbor...
And a good focus word... As we wrap this up... For us to look at this morning...
[15:25] Is that term... Provision... That you see in the last... Make no provision for the flesh... To gratify its desires... When we talk about... Provision... Paul's actually saying...

Something about... You know... The forethought we're giving... To how we're living... What are we preparing... The ground for... When we go... When we deploy with the military... We have a kit list we follow...
And it's very important... To follow that kit list... When I went down to Haiti... I showed up there... I found two problems... As soon as I opened my cases up... First...
I had brought my bug hood... Not my bug net... That goes over my bed... That's not a great thing... When you're in Haiti... You're not preparing yourself... For success... And not getting malaria...
If you don't have a bug net... Luckily I didn't get it... Thank God... Secondarily... I had not properly... Unpacked my kit... From winter exercise... Because it was in the... The middle of November... Or the middle of January...
[16:20] And I found my gauntlets... Which are big leather gloves... That come up to here... I found all my... My... My bella clava... Things like that... Absolutely useless... Provisioning yourself properly...

Sets the ground for success... We actually will bring... The guys together... Before we go on exercise... Or on deployment... They will bring in their rucksack... There's an old one... For some of you... I know there's some older...
Army folks here... You'll probably remember that one... They will come... They will put a tarp out... And all the soldiers... Will have to lay out... All their kits... In perfect order...
For the warrant or sergeant... To come along... And basically judge... What it is they brought... And what they haven't brought... Because provisioning yourself... Properly... Prepares the ground for success...
And if one or two people... Forget important pieces of kit... That could have a major effect... On the operation itself... If you think about it... If anybody here... Was going to be going away...
[17:15] Somewhere for a couple of weeks... And we were to take your suitcase... And lay it out here... We could probably figure out... What it is you've prepared for...

Over the next two weeks... What it is that you've provisioned yourself for... Whether you're going to Alaska... Which is probably not advisable these days... Or... If you're going to the Caribbean... Very different items that you're taking...

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If we were to look... At our day-to-day lives... And how we prepare ourselves... What are we really provisioning ourselves for? On a day-to-day basis...
Are you setting yourself up? Am I setting myself up... For spiritual success? There's an old saying that... If you're an alcoholic...
You probably shouldn't be planning... To tie your horse up in front of a bar... How am I preparing my day? Am I setting myself up... For spiritual success?
[18:10] Making no provision... Success means preparing the ground... For holiness in our lives... Cutting out the provision... For anything else... And so a good start...

Is putting Jesus on spiritually... Every morning... The... Our spiritual practice that we have... Our growing in grace spiritual practice...
Recommends that we need to grow in prayer... And a way to do this... Is to learn to pray the Bible... To learn to pray our way... Through the Bible... I always recommend... If we're starting a spiritual practice...
To start with the Gospels... I'm going to recommend... That you read through... Every morning this week... A story... Even just a short story... Of Jesus... Or something Jesus said... Pray through it... Notice Jesus... Be slow as you go through it... And as you do that... As you do that... And you're immersed in them... Start contemplating the day to come...
[19:08] And ask two questions... As I think about... What I'm about to do today... What is going to bring me closer to Jesus... And what's possibly going to take me further away...

And then just pray your way through that... And let God... Sanctify your day... From moment to moment... Very simple spiritual practice to start with...
What's going to bring me closer to Jesus... What's going to take me further away... Paul is calling us... To a further spiritual depth... And as we contemplate Advent...
And the Advent of Christ... And the love that came down... The love that... Left heaven to live with us... And died for us... It's that display of love...
That compels us... As we seek to be people of godly love... In all times... In all moments... Now I'm cognizant of the fact... That we have a very esteemed production... Coming up here after me... So I'm going to... Wrap up with a big finish right there...
[20:10] There's an old saying... That... That it's too late to dig a well... If you're already thirsty... We talk about preparing the ground...

I'm not talking about... You know... Some moralistic sense of... Just be good and God will love you... What we're talking about is... Maintaining our spiritual wells...
So that the spiritual water of God's grace... Will overflow and spread through your entire life... So that even the small moral choices... That we make themselves...
Become acts of worship... And sanctify our day... And these become moments... Of communion with God... Through Jesus Christ... Who saved us for that kind of life...
Let's pray... Loving God... Loving God... As Advent is upon us... And as we look to... Celebrate... The coming of our Lord Jesus... To live among us and save us...
[21:08] We pray Lord God... That you would... Help us know... How to make manifest in our lives... The things that he taught us... And showed us... And the love that he gives to us...

By the power of your Holy Spirit... In your name we pray... Amen... Amen...

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