

Put on Christ “The Day is at Hand” / Morning Service

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Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[0 : 00] Well, I'd like to wish all of you a very happy new year today as we start our first season in the church year, the season of Advent. And my first resolution is to start a different sermon series other than Revelation.

We are going to take a break for about five or six weeks. And what we're doing in this time, either in our first season of the church year, is to go through some of the themes of Advent.

The Bible readings that have been chosen for many centuries for this season. And think about the disciplines of the Christian life. The things that God wants us to live into.

The ways that he wants us to respond to him. And really prepare us for Christmas and for the coming of Jesus someday. As you probably know, the word Advent means coming in Latin.

And it leads us to really consider the truth that Jesus, who has come as a baby in Bethlehem, both God and man, will come again in great glory.

[1 : 08] To judge the living and the dead, as we said earlier in the service. And to bring about a new heaven and a new earth. Where all that is against God's will is brought in, is taken away.

And that we will see Jesus in all of his majesty. And so Advent makes us ask, how does the coming of Jesus, not only at Bethlehem, but his coming again in great glory.

How does that shape your life? How does it change your priorities? How does it change the way that you make plans? And live out your life day to day?

It's a very pointed kind of season that we have. Because it asks questions that go at the heart of who we are and what we're doing.

It's especially important this time of year. Because it can be very, very busy. The word that we often say when we ask how things are going is, I'm very busy.

[2 : 14] But it is in busyness that our hearts and our minds can wander. Can be very far away from God. If you go into certain stores, there is a push towards Christmas that begins very, very early.

There is a pressure. There is a certain large store that has Christmas decorations and Christmas presents. Around the time of my youngest son's birthday, which is August 23rd.

And the pressure grows. And now is the time where it comes at us full force. One catalog that I received yesterday sort of summed up that pressure very well.

It said, joy to the world, your shopping's done. And I thought, really? Is that what the joy of the world is all about? Is that where it's found?

And you see, it is a pressure that puts all kinds of unrealistic expectations on us. Pressure to have the perfect presents that you buy.

- [3 : 22] Pressure to prepare the most wonderful dinner party. Pressure to provide the happiest family memory. And pressure to have the most fulfilling Christmas season.
- That can be a very seductive expectation. Because there's lots that is good about what is being pushed. But they often, the expectations often have nothing to do with the expectations of the gospel.
- And so they very easily lead us away from Christ. And actually replace the priorities and the direction that God has for our lives.
- It leads to spiritual dullness. A sleepiness. And so Advent, in our reading from Romans, there on page 948, calls us to something very, very different.
- It calls us to a radical spiritual wakefulness and life. And so if you look at chapter 13, verse 11, there's a theme.
- [4 : 30] You know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. And that's because Paul knows that in this reading, he knows that Christians are tempted and pulled into spiritual sleepiness.
- In which we are so distracted or perhaps troubled by many things in this life that we lose out on the one thing necessary.
- Which is Jesus Christ. And Advent, in all the seasons of the church year, actually bring us back to Christ. It brings us back to the living reality of the Lord of our life.
- And it brings us life. Now if you Google sleep, it is defined as a condition of body and mind, get this, in which the nervous system is relatively inactive.
- The eyes closed. The postural muscles relaxed. And a consciousness that is practically suspended. So there you go. Think about that when you're falling asleep tonight.
- [5 : 39] It's actually a very helpful definition. Because spiritual sleep means that we are inactive towards God, who is our life. Our eyes are closed to the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.
- Paul prays later on in one of his letters that God would open our eyes, the eyes of our hearts, to his hope. We have relaxed muscles in this sleepiness.
- Relaxed muscles in our service for him. And finally, we're not conscious of the reality of what is going around us. That reality that Jesus is on the throne, as we've been hearing about in Revelation.
- That he rules all things. That he loves you. And he is bringing his salvation to the world and to you as well, every day.
- So, how do we wake up? Well, Advent brings us to God's word. Because God's voice is a voice of wakefulness.
- [6 : 46] It wakes us up spiritually. It's the nature of it. And I don't know about you, but I find that people's voices are the most effective way to wake up in the morning.
- I'm not a morning person. And I went through many, many alarm clocks before I was married. Hits the snooze button a lot. I was very good at sleeping through the alarm.
- But after the birth of my two sons, I had no problem getting up early. Both my boys have been morning people. And they get up and they are ready to go at full speed.
- And the first thing that happens when they woke up all these years is that they would start talking. I would hear voices. And I could not sleep through those voices.
- In fact, often those voices were addressing me. So I really didn't have a choice. In Advent and this morning, God's voice is addressing you.
- [7 : 46] And it is actually calling you to wake up just by virtue of the living God speaking to you. And he says this in verse 8, if you look. Oh, no one anything except to love each other.

Which means loving Christian brothers and sisters. For the one who loves another, which means those who are outside the church, has fulfilled the law.

And that word that he uses for love, agape, is the word that Paul uses for God's love throughout this book of Romans.

Only about God's love. And amazingly, in chapter 5, God shows that love for us. In that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were enemies, God's love was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to you. And now suddenly, in chapter 12, the previous chapter and this one, Paul uses that same word for love as the way that we ought to love people in our own lives.

[8 : 59] Both inside and outside the church. It's sobering in that way. Because we see how radical this love is. In the last chapter, chapter 12, Paul wrote that that love extends to working for the goodwill of even people who persecute you.

Even those who are your enemies. It means seeking their well-being. Their goodness. And if you have feelings of vengefulness, which inevitably you will, you leave it to God's wrath.

Now this will wake you up. This makes us a bit uncomfortable in our waking up. Because what he says here, too, is that it is the one obligation or debt that is without limit.

You know, Paul's just been talking about our relationship with the government. He says, pay taxes. The debt of taxes. There is a limit to that. But pay what you owe. But there is a quota.

There is a limit that can never be filled or completed or paid off. And that is the quota of love. It is limitless.

[10 : 13] And it is because it is completely based on the fact that God has loved us beyond our ability to pay back. Beyond anything we can ask or imagine.

This is what you know you have received once you place your trust in Jesus. It is so great that Paul prays for us.

That we will be strengthened to actually know in the letter of Ephesus. What is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth of Jesus' love.

That pouring out of God's love is so immense. That if we could see it spiritually. It would be much greater than being close up to Niagara Falls.

And horseshoe falls put together. There is this magnitude of God's love overflowing into our life. There is this abundance.

[11 : 10] Remember we talked about that in 2 Corinthians. And so the nature of God's love is it simply must overflow. It is that lavish. And God's voice says here therefore.

That if you are to love with that love. It must be shared. It must overflow into people's lives. We love because he first loved us.

When we love in that way. As an overflow of God's love for us. It is full of gratitude. It is so self-giving. So full of gratitude.

That God says. God's voice here says that the one who loves in this way has fulfilled the law. Look at the end of verse 8. Love has fulfilled the law.

For the commandments you shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not covet. These are all relationship commands. Between us and those around us.

[12 : 12] They are all 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. And again that's because that love overflows from God.

And so it desires what God commands. It loves what God loves. It seeks the good. The same good in other people. That God himself seeks in people.

And so the law is a wonderful gift for us. Who have been saved by Jesus Christ. Because it spells out. It makes real and concrete.

The ways that I can love God. Who has saved me. Return the love. That has been lavished on me. It's not an aimless love. It's not a wishy-washy love.

It is one that is clearly revealed to us. By God. In his law. Now at this point. If you're like me. You will say. This is very challenging.

[13 : 16] This is hard. To give. This is a debt that's hard to be paying off. All of the time. And if you don't think you struggle. Ask your spouse.

Or your close friend. How you're doing with this. And you may get a clearer idea. Because Paul is very open about the fact. That there are two forces at work within us.

We live in an in-between time. Where the light of Jesus has come into a dark world. But that dark world. Is still with us. It still affects us.

I feel the pull of Adam's nature. That rebelled against God. And said. I want to be like God. And it asserts myself over God. And if I gratify this pull of the flesh.

It means. I become sleepy. Spiritual. A sleepy Christian. But if I trust Jesus. I've entered into a new world.

[14 : 15] I feel the pull of Jesus Christ. And eternity. And I thank God for it. But those two worlds. One of spiritual darkness. Another filled by the light of Christ.

Overlap each other. And we have this contrast. In our lives. You see that contrast in verse 11 and 12. We'll see it until the coming of Jesus. There is sleep. And there is wakefulness.

There is night. And there is day. There is darkness. And there is light. That we experience together. And I must follow. The one pull. That's what God's voice is saying to us.

The pull of the Holy Spirit. And not make provision. For the other pull. Of flesh. So the question is. How do I do it.

In this struggle. How does it happen. Well it is only. By the help. The mercy. The mercy. And the grace. Of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[15 : 12] And verse 14. Says it really beautifully. It says. I need to put on Jesus. Which is the same. As putting on. The armor of light. That which makes me able to.

Go forth into the struggle. With strength. And with purpose. And with confidence. In Jesus Christ. Not in my own. Abilities. The great gift.

That we have received. From Jesus. When we trust him. Is that we are reconciled. To God. The father. Through the forgiveness. Of our sins. We're made. His children. By adoption. And that happens.

Because Jesus. Unites himself. To us. And he covers us. With a righteousness. A right. Living before God. That is not our own.

It's something that's given. As a gift. And that. Is the basis. Of the spiritual armor. That we put on ourselves. It's the only way.

[16 : 08] That we can know. The holy perfect God. And really know. His love for us. And his living presence. In our life. Jesus has covered us. With this gift. Isaiah puts it beautifully.

In Psalm 61. Remember Jesus preached. On Psalm 61. But here's what it says. It says. My soul shall be joyful. In my God. For he has clothed me.

With garments of salvation. He has covered me. With the robe. Of righteousness. You see what. How Jesus fulfills this.

Jesus covers you. With his robes. The robes. That were made white. Because they are washed. In the blood of the lamb. Is something we have seen. In Revelation. And just as.

I put these robes on. This morning. Before the service. Jesus puts that robe. Of righteousness. Upon us. Spiritually. And that means.

[17 : 06] That if you place. Your trust in Jesus. He is united to you. He walks with you. And he spiritually covers you. In all your relationships.

He is the closest. Thing to you. Therefore. In all your relationships. So you look at me. Through Christ. And you look at the world. Around you. Through Christ.

If you are angry. And bitter. With somebody. Christ is actually there. With you. And the person. That you are angry with. If you are serving someone.

Jesus is there. In that serving. In that serving relationship. So. To put on Christ. Means. First of all. To look at that gift.

Of being covered. By his righteousness. And to receive it joyfully. And live. Into it. It's to wake up every day. Thankful. That you are united to Christ.

[18 : 02] And that you have received. His righteousness. He's given you. Salvation. And we see that salvation. Described in verse 11.

This is an amazing verse. Because it says this. It says the hour has come. For you to wake from sleep. For salvation is near to us. Than we first believed.

In that little verse. We see salvation. As being past. Present. And future. So it says. When you first believed. Meaning you have been saved.

From the penalty of sin. When you put your faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ. To give us. His righteousness. At that moment. Your soul was redeemed. From being separated from God.

And you belong to Jesus forever. Something called justification. Sanctification. But in that verse. Salvation is also present. Because it says. That you are to wake from sleep.

[18 : 57] And keep on waking from sleep. Every day. So that you know. You are being saved. You are saved. From the power of sin.

It no longer can dominate you. Each day. Unless you willfully allow it. That present salvation. Is called sanctification. It is God's work.

In giving your soul. Freedom. Freedom. From the power of sin. And actually to worship God. Instead. As you love others. By the grace and truth of God.

Paul says. We are to awake to that. Daily. And you are. You and I are growing. In that salvation. In living out. That freedom. Each day. But there is also.

A future salvation. That we also focus on. In Advent. And it says here. Your salvation. Is nearer to us now. Than when you first believe.

[19 : 55] It is closer. So there is also. An aspect of salvation. That you shall be saved. Not only from the penalty. And the power of sin. But also one day.

From the presence of sin. It will no longer be there. All death. All sorrow. All suffering. All separation. Will be taken away.

From us. Forever. And we will be taken to glory. And we will receive the redemption. Of our bodies. Which Paul said a bit earlier. In chapter 8. Is called glorification.

So do you see. In this salvation. That it is all God's work. It is behind us. It is with us. It is before us. He has done it all for you.

By his grace. And his love. It is glorious. And it is for you. And what Paul says. With a great deal of urgency. Is that salvation.

[20 : 54] Needs to be unwrapped. It is something that we are meant. To live into. And that's why he says. In verse 12.

The night is far gone. The day is at hand. Let us cast off. The works of darkness. And put on. The armor of light. Live into.

That righteousness. That Jesus covers you with. And. And it's saying here. In that little verse. To cast off. Works of darkness. Put on the armor of light.

That you. Actually cannot. Put on Christ. Unless you cast off. The works of darkness. You cannot love.

In the way that. He calls us to love. Unless you receive. The love of Jesus Christ. In your life. There is a real sense. Of repentance. About the.

[21 : 47] The season of advent. It tells us. That God has saved us. He is saving us. He will save us. And we must. Urgently take on. This discipline.

Of repentance. Of casting off. And putting on. This. This is what Jesus. Is calling to us. Right now. And that repentance.

Will involve. Very practical things. It will involve. Reading God's word. That idea. Of time. Is so important. In this. Little.

Passage. Time. Time is precious. He is saying. And we need to take. That precious time. To read God's word. Because they are words.

Of life. And vitality. They are words. That reveal. Our heart. That actually. Bring us. To that place. Of repentance. And we look at that.

[22 : 41] And are built up in it. Because. With God's voice. We also look for promises. That we are to hold on to. We look at commandments. That we are to keep. The way that we can actually.

Love others. In Jesus name. And we can pray. That Jesus gives us. Understanding. As we read that living word. And the second thing.

That this passage. In Advent. Calls us to. Is to ask yourself. In Jesus presence. What is the work of darkness? What is the sin. In my life. That I need to cast off.

Is there a work of repentance? Because he has. Promised. That the dominion. Of sin. Is lifted from us. Any sin. That is holding you back.

He has given us. The gift. Of freedom from. And thirdly. This passage says. That we can ask. The Holy Spirit. To strengthen you.

[23 : 37] To love. The greatest gift. Of the Holy Spirit. Is the love. Is that agape. That God. Pours. Into our life. It is good for us.

Every day. To ask the Holy Spirit. To strengthen us. To love. To pour that love. Into our life. By his grace. And then finally. There is a real sense.

Of service. In what Paul is saying here. He talks an awful lot. About the way that we relate. To one another. He talks about the fact. That we are to love.

In a self. Sacrificing. Giving way. How can I serve? So to. To pray for. And look for ways. That I can. Love in the way. Paul has spoken.

God has chosen people. In your life. To serve. To care for. To bring his goodness. Into their lives. And to actually speak. About the salvation.

[24 : 32] Of Jesus. Which is saving you now. And will save you. And has saved you. You can speak about it. In a unique way. In the only way.

That often people. In your lives. Can hear. And I want you to notice. As we go away. From this passage. That that desire. To serve people. In our life. Is the very opposite.

Of the desires. Of the works. Of darkness. So. In verse 13. We hear about. All of the darkness. That was surrounding. The church. In Rome. We hear about.

Orgies. And drunkenness. Just complete. Sort of. Lavish. Excess. On oneself. Speaks about. Sexual immorality.

And sensuality. Living. Completely. For pleasure. Here. And it. Talks about. Quarreling. And jealousy. Which were. Widespread. Now.

[25 : 26] These works. Are all about. The worship. Of self. About asserting. Yourself. Against others. And against God. Not wanting. To miss out. Obsessed.

With the way. That people. View me. And there's a bit. Of a shocking. Thing for us. Because busyness. That we often. Boast in. Can easily. Have elements. In it. Of missing out.

Of living for the things. That affirm you. And the way people. View you. But the armor. Of light. Allows us to live. Very differently.

It strengthens us. To love. Sacrificially. It helps us. To put away. The desires. Of the flesh. The things. That would take us. Into the works.

Of darkness. And there is a joyful. Self. Forgetting way. Of living. That that armor. Allows us. To live. With Jesus Christ. At the center.

[26 : 21] Of our planning. And of our thinking. There is a true joy. In this life. Of salvation. That can't be created. It can't be experienced. Without Jesus.

No matter what. The voices. The world. Tell us. This is the voice. Of the one. Who has created us. And has saved us. This is the real joy. To the world. So may God.

Give his grace. To hear. That voice. In the time. That he has given. To us. And let's pray together. I'm going to pray.

The collect. That we prayed. Earlier. For Advent. We'll close with this. Almighty God.

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.

[27 : 17] 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. Now and forever. Amen.