

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent

November 27, 2022

“Live and love like there is no tomorrow!”

(Romans 13:8-11)

By Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent is from our epistle reading, Romans 13:8-11.

**“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”**

Here ends our text.

I. Our keeping of the law is unfulfilled

**“Do this, knowing the time...”**

In the retail world there is a definite call to action associated with the concept of time. It seems that every year about this time, Black Friday gets pushed up sooner and sooner. This year it seemed like Monday is the new Black Friday. In fact, hearing from some of the church members who work at the outlet mall in Mercedes, appointments can now be made to ensure that you “get in while the getting is good.” Retail selling creates a sense of urgency to do your Christmas shopping as early as possible to give people as much time as possible to spend and spend.

Well, our text also speaks about a sense of urgency to love and love –to love God and neighbor... knowing the time. “Do this” Paul says. Do what? Well, Paul gets into a few specifics, doesn’t he? He lists a few of the commandments that need to be urgently fulfilled – **“You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not**

**murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,”**. He’s not concerned about listing them in order and basically doesn’t leave any out when he says, **and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**

Love. Love does no harm to one’s neighbor. And, of course, loving God is included for 1 John 4:20 reminds us, **“for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”**

Do this...namely. Fulfill the law. Our Advent to do list, no appointment needed, is to do all of God’s commandments. And this is not something that can be put off for tomorrow. **“Owe no one anything...”** Literally, in verses preceding our Epistle reading, Paul reminds us that we all have to pay our taxes on time. We shouldn’t have any outstanding debt to the government whom God has placed in authority.

And yet, Paul then tells us that there is an ever present debt that is always needing our attention and that is “to love”. This is a debt that can never be noted, “Paid in full.” And that’s unsettling, isn’t it. No one likes to have unpaid debts, do we?

Yet, God demands that our debts be settled with our neighbor perfectly. That we love our neighbor perfectly in all that we do, think, and say. Yes, our Advent to do list continues to grow each and every day on how we can love our neighbor as ourselves.

And to top it off, time is short. **“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”**

Our Gospel reading tells us **“To be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”** Black Friday shoppers are given a heads up but the world does not know when Christ will return. So, basically love your neighbor like there is no tomorrow!

Well, as difficult as Christmas shopping is to complete, it is impossible to fulfill the law. And that’s why as we awake out of our sleep to think about how we can love our neighbor more, we are comforted by what Paul says, **“for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”**

II. Our salvation has been fulfilled by Christ

Nearer. The day when Christ returns is a day of joyful expectation for the Christian. For though we have not fulfilled God's law, Christ has. Jesus loved the world like there was no tomorrow. He loved God His Father perfectly. He loved His neighbor as Himself perfectly and fulfilled what we weren't ever able to do!

On that Black Friday over 2000 years ago, Jesus loved like there was no tomorrow and literally there wasn't. He had to give the ultimate sacrifice of love on the cross for the sins of the world. If He came down from the cross, there was no tomorrow for all of humanity.

Here's how John describes Jesus' love in 1 John 4.

**9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."**

Propitiation. Jesus turned away the wrath of God for our unfulfilling of His law by providing Himself as the sacrificial Lamb.

And now, there is nothing that stands in the way of our salvation! Nothing! Jesus could come at any time and we are ready by faith in Him to enter into eternal glory! Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Our final removal of our sinful nature and salvation from this sinful world can happen at any time.

You know there have been secular songs written with these lyrics, "Love me like there is no tomorrow." Basically, the song writer is saying that he or she wants all one's love. Don't hold anything back. I want all your attention, time and love.

Well, if a man or a woman could actually do that, it still wouldn't rescue one from one's sinfulness. But thanks be to God, Jesus did love me and you and all people like there was no tomorrow! He laid down His life so that we might live through Him! Live through Him now and eternally!

Our salvation has been won so what is God calling us to do? John tells us the same thing that Paul tells us.

III. Therefore, love as you have been loved

**11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:7-11)**

There’s an ought in this verse. We have to be told to love. It doesn’t come to us naturally or easily. The Holy Spirit leads us to intentionally show each other the love we know in Christ.

When is it most difficult to love another? When things are going well? After a good meal? After your team wins? No, when someone does something that irritates you? Criticizes you? Forgets something important? Yes, our weaknesses, short comings and sinful self-centeredness easily come to light. Yes, there isn’t a day in any of our lives where we love each other perfectly. We fail, but God never fails.

And so, we begin each day anew in Jesus, remembering how He has loved us, forgiven us, and given us a new spirit to love each other. And then set out to imitate what He lays out so beautifully for us.

**“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”** Ephesians 5:2

Beloved, dear children, that’s how God speaks through John to all of us who believe. You are dearly loved by God! You have known Him since you were born of God by your baptisms. He has shown His great love to all of us in that He sent His Son to be the sacrifice for us all. And so, love as He has loved. Owe no one anything except to love. What we do imperfectly, we gladly tell others, God has done perfectly by forgiving all our sins.

We thank God for each and every tomorrow that God gives us to love as we have been loved. And look forward to the tomorrow when our loving Lord returns!  
Amen.

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**